

**Exploring the experiences of young adult women growing  
up with non-resident fathers in North West – Tlokwe local  
Municipality**

by

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## **Dedications**

This study is dedicated to my daughter, Reabetswe Hlongoane Lobaka. I love you with all my heart. The day you were born I changed my life forever because I knew I had found someone for whom I wanted to live. I do not make many promises but the one promise I will make and keep is that you will never have to ask the question: Where is my father? I may be physically absent but the warmth of my love will always be the blanket that keeps you warm at night. You are my life, my love and my all. My world without you is not my world. I love you, Sunshine.

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## **Declarations**

I declare that “**Exploring the experiences of young adult women growing up with non-resident fathers in North West – Tlokwe Local Municipality**” is my own work and that all the resources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Signature

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Date

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the experiences of young adult women raised in non-resident father households in Tlokwe Local Municipality, North West. Focus groups and face-to-face interviews were conducted with 34 young women between the ages 18-25. Five important, nuanced themes emerged, these are: a) fathers who are physically present but emotionally absent, b) fathers who are physically present but uninvolved, c) fathers who are physically absent but involved, d) fathers who are physically present and involved and e) fathers who are absent and uninvolved. Non-resident fatherhood remains a challenge in the Tlokwe Municipality, most of the participants had never met their biological fathers. The study revealed the frustration young women feel towards their mothers and maternal grandparents for caring more about maintenance than they do about a healthy father-daughter relationship. The study further revealed a deep-seated need for close proximity and an involved type of fathering among the young women.

**Keywords:** fatherhood, life course perspective, absent fathers, skip-families, orphanhood, gatekeeping, Non-resident father, social father, Cross-generational relationship, trajectory.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*“I don’t wanna make the first move. I think if he [my father] never comes into my life I will die without knowing my father”*

A response of Lebo – one of the participants of an in-depth interview

The responses of daughters to living in non-resident fathered households are key to this study. There has been little research conducted into the experiences and views of children of fatherhood in South Africa (Wessels & Lesch 2014; Makusha & Richer 2014; Lesch & Scheffler 2016) and, thus, there are several unanswered questions as to how children respond to growing up in households without their biological fathers.

Mamphela Ramphela conducted a study involving 16 young black people in 1991. The study was entitled “Steering by the stars: being young in South Africa” (Ramphela & Richter 2002). Of these 16 young people only one had been raised by both parents. These young people shared their stories about families, social networks and gang violence and also, importantly for this study, about fathers. These 16 young people all had different perspectives on their fathers – some painfully missed their absent fathers while, others, although their fathers had been present, had generally experienced abuse, both verbal and physical. The children in the study expressed how a loss of a father, especially through death, had complicated their lives with one respondent referring to the difficulty that arises from having no father to introduce you to his ancestors through a traditional ceremony known as *imbeleko* (Ramphela & Richter 2006). Richter & Smith (2006) and Nduna & Sikweyiya (2013) also found that most children experience a longing and a desire to spend time with their father and when fathers fail to feature in their children’s lives, the children often feel let down and that regardless of the presence of a social father (among others, stepfathers, uncles, grandfathers, and the mother’s partner), children react by manifesting feelings of hatred, anger, frustration, lack of respect and love.

## 1.1 The research problem

Absent fathers is a growing phenomenon affecting families in South Africa. The large majority of single parent households in South Africa are headed by women (Ellis & Adams, 2009). Based on the analysis of the 2002–2014 General Household Survey conducted by Statistics South Africa, Hall & Meintjies (2016) report that the proportion of children living in a household with both parents has decreased from approximately 39% in 2002 to 35% in 2014. The absent father phenomenon is more likely to occur in households than the absence of the mother. Hall et al. (2016) found that 41% of children live in mother-only households (this translates to 7.5 million children) and that 4% only live in father-only households. In South Africa, North West Province has the second highest number of father absent households at 44.6% after Mpumalanga at 46.4%. These statistics are higher than the national average of 39%, thus, indicating the severity of the problem in these two provinces (Statistics South Africa 2012).

Although father absence poses a challenge to the society at large children are the most affected by this phenomenon. According to Pruett (in Ritcher & Smith 2006; p. 156), “[t]here is evidence of children’s father need for safety, respect, companionship and guidance provided by men”. Richter et al. (2006) further argue that, in such cases, psychological and anthropological research has demonstrated an intense “father hunger”. Olson (2008) defines father hunger as a deep sense of longing a child has for his/her father. Based on this premise this study will be steered by the following research question: ***What are the experiences of young adult women raised in a household without their fathers?***

According to Morrell (2006, p. 18), “fatherhood is understood as the social role that men undertake to care for their children” and, thus, as Lamb (2000) points out, fatherhood is socially constructed. The importance and meaning of this role have shifted over time with the dominant roles played by fathers changing from fathers as moral teachers and guides to including their role as a breadwinner and, more recently, to taking care of the general well-being of the children, including participating in household duties. However, fathers have often had to leave their families for long periods in order to provide food for their families and this has led to the

emergence and later frequency of non-resident fathered homes. There is no universally agreed upon definition of the term fatherhood and, thus, the first subsidiary research question formulated for the purposes of this study was: **How do young adult women who grew up in non-resident father households conceptualise fatherhood?**

Girls who live in households without a father experience various challenges. Although a father's presence does not always lead to positive outcomes, studies have shown that a father's absence may have dire consequences for the general well-being of a child (Eddy et al. 2013; Rabe 2006; Shayeghifard, Rehafi & Esfandiari, 2014). According to Makusha et al. (2012), a father plays an important role in the sexual, moral, cognitive and language development of children. The following second subsidiary research question was formulated: **What are the challenges that young adult women experience as a result of having a non-resident father?**

The third subsidiary research question was: **What are the consequences of growing up in a non-resident father household for young adult women?** This research question was deemed to be important because it investigated the negative consequences that girls growing up without a father often experience later in their adult lives. In addition, the absence of fathers in households also has negative consequences for the socioeconomic status of the home. Research in South Africa has found that households with a father are characterised by higher expenditure, improved access to resources and better protection when compared to father absent homes (Desmond & Desmond 2006; Redpath, Morrell, Jewkes & Peacock 2008).

According to Richter & Smith (2006), children experience fatherhood as affirming regardless of whether their fathers are unemployed, non-resident fathers or even abusive and, as a result, children may seek one or more men in their lives to father them. This construct is known as social fathering. Social fathering is "a term that includes, amongst others, stepfathers, uncles, grandfathers, and a mother's partner" (Makusha et al. 2012:130). The fourth subsidiary research question was: ***What are the experiences of young adult women of adult men, other than their biological fathers, as regards these men taking on caring roles towards***

**them?** This question explores the experiences of young women with non-biological fathers and the role that these social fathers play in the general well-being of such young women.

## **1.2 The significance of the study**

According to Scheffler & Naus (1999), the presence of the mother is important for a host of reasons while there are also factors that are directly linked to the father's acceptance of his child. As stated in **section 1.1**, there is no evidence that a father's presence in a child's life necessarily leads to positive outcomes although research has shown that a father's absence in a child's life has adverse outcomes.

According to Mancini (2010), in the North American context, girls living in households where the father is absent are more likely to exhibit a lower level of self-esteem, a higher level of risky behaviour, experience difficulties in forming and maintaining romantic relationships in later life, are more likely to fall pregnant at an early age; and are more likely to drop out of school. In South Africa, abandonment by a father has also been associated with the dysfunctional psychological, social and cognitive development of a child (Eddy et al. 2013). For the purposes of this study "father presence" will, therefore, have two meanings; firstly, a father's physical presence in a household and, secondly, a nuanced understanding of father presence. The latter is important because, as stated by Richter et al. (2006:11), "*A father might be physically present, but emotionally absent, physically absent but emotionally supportive*". My conceptualisation of father absence will be based on the working definition of Eddy et al. (2013: 13), namely, as "*a father's emotional disengagement from his child's life regardless of whether he is present or distant*".

It is hoped that this study will be significant because it will provide young adult women with a space in which to share their experiences of the effects of growing up without their biological fathers while also providing them with a platform from which to voice their opinions on the challenges that fatherlessness brings to both a girl child and to a teenage girl as well as the lasting effects experienced during adulthood. This research study is aimed at providing an insight into the challenges that are faced by fatherless girls. It must be noted that, to date,

much of the research on the subject has either focused on boys or it has clustered boys and girls together (Richter et al. 2012; Makusha et al. 2012; Chauke & Khunou 2014).

### **1.3 Research objectives of the study**

The overall research objective of the study was to determine, by means of a life course perspective, the experiences of non-resident fathers of young adult women in the Tlokwe Municipality, North West. The following include the specific research objectives of the study.

- To explore young adult women's conceptualisation of fatherhood and what it entails.
- To explore the challenges of young adult women raised in households with non-resident fathers.
- To explore the long term effects on young adult women who grew up in non-resident father households.
- To explore the experiences of young women who were cared for by adult men other than their biological fathers.

### **1.4 Research methodology**

The study used a qualitative research approach in order to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of young adult women growing up in non-resident fathers in the Tlokwe Local Municipality. According to Fouché and Delport (2002), qualitative research allows researchers to acquire a deeper understanding of social life and the significance which people accord to everyday life.

The study used two methods to collect the requisite qualitative data, namely, focus group interviews and in-depth interviews. The questions posed during the focus group interviews were structured in such a way so as to allow the participants to share their general understanding and conceptualisation of fatherhood while the face-to-face interviews addressed the issues and challenges that the young women had experienced in their individual lives as a result of growing up with non-resident fathers. A total of 34 participants

from the Tlokwe Local Municipality were purposefully sampled and interviewed. Of the 34 participants sampled 24 participated in the focus group interviews, whilst 10 participated in the face-to-face interviews. All the interviews were audio-tape recorded and then transcribed. The transcriptions were then analysed using content analysis. Imas & Rist (2009:387) define content analysis as “[a] type of systematic analysis of qualitative data that identifies and notes, through codes, the presence of certain words, phrases, or concepts within text, speech and/or other media”.

#### **1.4.1. Theoretical approach**

In this study I drew on the life course perspective in order to understand the experiences of young adult women raised in fatherless homes. This perspective is based on Elder’s observations of children from the time of the Great Depression (Elder 1974). Based on his observation Elder formulated four principles that form the basis of life course perspective. The first principle is historical time and place, namely that “the life course of individuals is embedded in and shaped by the historical time and place they experience over their lifetime”. According to Kok (2007), this principle indicates that historical context and the specific location in which one finds oneself have a significant impact on the individual concerned. According to the second principle, namely, timing lives, “the developmental impact of a succession of life transitions or events is contingent on when they occur in a person’s life”. The third principle, linked lives, states that lives are lived interdependently and that social and historical influences are expressed through this network of shared relationships. The fourth principle is human agency which states that individuals construct their own life course through their choices and the actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstance. I used these four concepts to study the lived experiences of young adult women of fatherlessness.

#### **1.4.2. Ethical considerations**

Approval to conduct this study was granted by two committees at two different levels. The first approval was granted by the UNISA Sociology Department’s Ethical Committee. The

application for ethical clearance was reviewed in compliance with the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics and was granted on condition that I adhered to the values and principles as indicated in the policy. The second approval was granted by the Department of Education in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District and gave me permission to approach and recruit participants from various schools within the Tlokwe Local Municipality. Both the approval letters are attached in **Appendix A** and **Appendix B** respectively. In addition, I had to obtain permission from the principals of the various schools to recruit participants. This permission took the form of verbal agreement from the principals of both the schools I approached.

- **Informed consent**

The research participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. They were given the informed consent forms attached in **Appendix D** and were requested to sign these before the interviews commenced. I also obtained the permission of the participants to use the audio-tape recorder before I switched it on.

- **Anonymity and confidentiality**

In order to ensure that participants' identities remained anonymous and that the information they provide remained confidential, the participants were not required to use their real names during the sessions. Instead each participant was given a number with which to identify themselves by before giving a response. This was done to ensure that no one outside of the research team would be able to ascribe a response to a particular participant. Furthermore, before the commencement of every focus group, I stressed the importance of ensuring that the responses of the other participants remained within the confines of the rooms where the interviews took place. In the case of the individual interviews pseudonyms were used.

### **1.5. Operational definitions**

**Absenteeism:** A father's emotional disengagement from his child's life, regardless of whether he is present or distant.

**Cohabitation:** A union in which two adults stay together without any contractual



arrangements, with or without children.

**Fatherhood:** The term generally refers to the social role that men undertake to care for their children (Richer & Morrell 2006:18).

**Gatekeeping:** Fagan & Barnett (in Molongoana 2015:15) define gatekeeping as “mothers preferences and attempts to restrict and exclude fathers from child care and involvement with children”.

**Non-resident father:** Refers to biological fathers who do not reside in the home with their children.

**Skip-families:** The Department of Social Development (2013:3) describes skip families as “a family type where grandparents raise their grandchildren (without the grandchildren’s parents).”

**Social father:** A male relative (uncle, grandfather, stepfather, brother) or a family associate or community member (pastor, teacher) who undertakes the role of the father in the absence of the biological father.

**Orphan:** The generally accepted definition of an orphan is a child under the age of 18 who lost both his/her parents through death (Hall et al. 2014). However, Skinner et al. (2004) argue that this definition was extended to include children whose parents have deserted them or who are unable or unwilling to provide care for the children.

## **1.6. Limitations of the research**

The key limitations of the study were the nature of the research conducted as well as the sensitivity of the issue investigated. As a male researcher discussing a sensitive subject such as experiences of fatherhood and fatherlessness, I was at a disadvantage because some of the women felt inhibited about expressing their frustrations with and experiences of fatherlessness. In order to minimise this aspect I tried to provide a relaxed atmosphere. I used a number of methods to put the participants at their ease including asking a general question which was unrelated to the study. This question served as an ice-breaking exercise and

provided the participants with the opportunity to share the interesting things they had done during the previous week. Some of their responses were in fact funny and this allowed them to relax. A further challenge was that certain reactions towards me as a male researcher may have differed from those towards a female researcher although this, in itself, could explain aspects of the relationships they may have had with their fathers. The study sought to generate an understanding of the research topic and not be representative of all the females in the chosen sample. It is important to note that the small sample size and the specific way in which the study was conducted constituted key limitations of the study and that a larger sample size and the inclusion of other areas within the Tlokwe Local Municipality could possibly have yielded different conclusions to those yielded by the actual study.

### **1.7. Organisation of the dissertation**

**Chapter 2** discusses the life course perspective as a theoretical orientation to the study and outlines the basic principles of the life course perspective, the historical development of this perspective and the critiques of it.

**Chapter 3** presents the literature review on fatherhood and the effects of fatherlessness on children, particularly young women.

**Chapter 4** details the methodological approach employed in this research study.

**Chapter 5** presents a comprehensive discussion of the core themes that arose from the interviews.

**Chapter 6** concludes with a discussion on the main findings of the study, the limitations of the study, the role of the researcher and recommendations for future studies.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework: The Life Course Perspective**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Life course may be defined as “the sequence of positions of a particular person in the course of time. A position that can either be marital status, parenthood, employment, residence in a particular location etcetera” (Kok 2007:204). Glen Elder Jnr was one of the earliest authors to write on life course perspective. The theory originated in three longitudinal studies of children that were conducted at the University of California, Berkeley and titled the Oakland Growth Study during the 1920s and early 1930s (Elder, 1998). According to Hutchison (2007:11), “he began to call for developmental theory and research that looked at the influence of historical forces on family, education, and work roles”. Elder (1981) noted that, according to the life course perspective, the individual is an important element of the family and thus the transition of this individual has consequences for the family as a whole.

According to Elder (1988), the developmental impact of a series of life transitions and events is purely dependent on when they occur in a person’s life. In the 1920s, Elder began a longitudinal study of the Oakland children of the Great Depression born during the period 1920 to 1921 who were the central figures of this study (Elder 1981) and the Berkeley Guidance children born at the end of the Great Depression (1928–29) (Elder 1998). For the Oakland children, although born at the beginning of a prosperous time, their adolescent years were characterised by hardship due to the economic collapse of the Great Depression and thus their historical location had placed their being at a risk of being deprived of essential household resources and necessities due to their parents’ inability to find work (Elder 1998). The study found that the prospects of the children of the Great Depression of finding employment and the girls participating in household processes were good, thus accelerating their socialisation and attachment to the adult world (Elder, 1981). According to Elder (1981:506) “in Children of the Great Depression, the timing of family and individual careers proved critical to

understanding hard times and its lasting effect". The study found that the way in which the children of this cohort (1920–21) had experienced the Depression depended on whether their families had lost their incomes and if so, to what extent. However, for the comparison group, the Berkeley Guidance children born at the end of the Great Depression, a totally different picture emerged as the study found that these children had experienced vulnerable childhood years together with family instability and stress (Elder 1974). While the 1920 to 1921 cohort had left home for educational purposes, to seek work and to establish families during the worst years of the 1930s, the Berkeley group's adolescent years had coincided with households without fathers who were away fighting in World War II and without older siblings who had left the home for the purposes of a university education. According to Elder (1998), the latter group of children were more affected by the economic collapse than the Oakland children. Elder, (1998: 3) summed this finding up as follows: "the timing of life transitions has long term consequences through effects on subsequent transitions."

## **2.2. Research implications**

According to Alwin (2012), life course perspective has gained prominence in the social and behavioural sciences in recent years. I adopted the life course perspective to provide a framework and context for the experiences of young women raised in non-resident father households. One of the predominant features of life course refers to events, transitions and trajectories (Alwin 2012). According to Elder (1994), the life course perspective is important because it connects the trajectories of personal lives to cultural and economic changes. Carpenter (2010) adds that an individual life course is a configuration of a number of trajectories which tend to occur simultaneously through various dimensions, for example, family, marriage and divorce. Blane, Netuveli & Stone (2007) continue that each trajectory extends from birth until death. The life perspective views an individual life holistically and does not confine an individual's outcome to a single event but, rather, to a sequence of transitions (Carpenter 2010; Johnson et al. 2010). However, features of earlier transitions, whether positive or negative, including timing, sequence and the extent to which they occur, influence

transition later in life (O'Rand 1996). Cumulative positive transitions tend to produce positive outcomes in later life while cumulative negative transitions tend to produce negative outcomes (O'Rand 1996). Another basic principle of life course is life event. Settersten (2003) defines a life event as a substantial incident involving a sudden change that usually leads to severe and long-term effects on individuals. In 1967, Holmes & Rahe invented a method of evaluating the effects of stressful events. This method is known as the social readjustment rating scale (Holmes 1978). A number of life events and their stress rating are listed. These events include, among others, pregnancy, death of a spouse, marital separation, marriage, detention in jail, etc. However, Settersten & Mayer (1997) suggest that, when studying the influence of life events, it is imperative that one classifies them along several dimensions, for example, major versus minor, anticipated versus unanticipated, controllable versus uncontrollable, typical versus atypical, desirable versus undesirable, acute versus chronic. Closely linked to life events is the principle of a turning point, namely, a point in the life course that represents a substantial change or discontinuity in direction. This turning point serves as a lasting change and is not just a temporary detour (Hutchison 2007:18). The occurrence of life events usually represents a turning point in an individual's life. For example, the death of a breadwinner as a life event will trigger a change in the household income and, potentially, leave the family to face poverty.

### **2.2.1. Timing lives**

Hareven & Masaoka (1988) suggest three central features of timing; firstly, the individual's career path, entry and exit into family and work role and, evidently, the exit from those roles into subsequent roles; secondly, the harmonising of an individual's transition to that of the entire family; and thirdly, the cumulative impact of early transitions on subsequent transitions. Life course scholars are interested in the age at which a certain transition occurs in an individual's life. In his article entitled "Integrating varieties of life course concepts", Alwin (2012) elucidates the arguments found in literature on the importance of early influence on an individual's life. On the one hand, Alwin (2012) argues that early family experience does not

inevitably shape an individual's life but, rather, that a human being has the ability to transform and transcend above their early childhood experiences. On the other hand, a vast array of research points to childhood experiences playing an important role in future life chances. Furthermore, it would appear that childhood experience shapes the successive transition of individuals and that these childhood experiences extend into adulthood. Elder (1974) contends that events experienced earlier in a life course may continue to affect the life trajectory of an individual or family throughout their lives. According to (Alwin 2012; Hutchison 2007), these events include, among others, the experience of marital dissolution, the experience of father absence, effects of early socioeconomic disadvantages, spousal death and pregnancy.

The sample used in this study comprised two cohorts 1990–91 and 1999–2000. The first cohort of children comprised those born at the beginning of the political transformation in South Africa. Although this gave hope to many South Africans, it signified an era characterised by much political and economic instability, including widespread violence in the country. The post-1990 children in this cohort of (1990–1991), although living in a democracy, also had to contend with the legacy of apartheid (Richter et al. 2009). In addition, even in a post-apartheid South Africa there were still concern with rapid urban growth and a lack of capacity for the cities to accommodate and service their residents. However, despite these concerns black children born post-apartheid had relatively better opportunities than the generations born before them (Bhorat, Poswell & Naidoo 2004) with post-apartheid South Africa focusing on the construction of infrastructure for poor communities as a basic need (Richter et al., 2009). These opportunities included basic access to services (Bhorat et al. 2004). On the other hand, the second cohort (1999–2000) is having to deal with the quality and inadequacy of these services. According to Richter et al. (2009), almost a quarter of children still live in informal settlements with the likelihood of inadequate basic services. The first cohort (1990–1991) faced high unemployment rates during their young adult years while the second cohort (1999–2000) is struggling with compromised basic infrastructure due to the size of households (Richter et al. 2009). Father absence was, however, common in both cohorts (Nduna &

Jewkes 2012; Nduna & Sikweyiya 2013; Richter et al 2009; Makusha et al. 2012). The few years prior to this study saw a drastic change in the pattern of family, with a decline in the number of marriages taking place and the an increase in cohabitation, especially for black South Africans (Hosegood, McGrath, Moultrie 2009, Amoateng & Heaton 2007, Posel, Rudwick & Casale 2011). According to Moore & Govender (2013), the highest proportion of people remaining single across all ages is found among black South Africans. According to Bumpass et al. (cited in Moore & Govender 2013), this may be attributed to cohabitation. Whether young women choose to marry early, cohabit as part of marital postponement, leave their homes in search for employment or education or have children while living in their parents' houses, these developmental impacts of a series of life transitions or events, as stated above, are dependent on when they occur in a person's life.

### **2.2.2. Human agency**

Human agency is another important concept in the life course perspective. This concept is based on the premise that "individuals construct their own lives through their choices and actions they take within social structures" (Alwin 2012:212). Carpenter (2010:159) distinguishes between four kinds of agency which help to sustain and create the self, namely existential agency which is "the capacity for self-directed action that underlies all other types of agencies", the identity agency which is exercised when people put into practice their everyday roles such as that of husband, father or an employee, pragmatic agency (as opposed to identity agency) which refers to random responses guided by the self, biography and values that people choose when their habitual ones break down and, finally, life course agency which refers to attempts by individuals to shape their life trajectories coupled with a belief in their abilities to achieve set goals (Carpenter 2010).

The human agency aspect of the life-course perspective is also evident in the way in which both women and children respond to a father's inability to live up to the provider construction of fatherhood. Rabe (2006) refers to findings of a study conducted by Campbell in a township in the 1990s, which found that children feel angry with their fathers if they are unable to provide

for them financially. Although the construction of fatherhood has been broadened to include other aspects such as the ability to provide care, the concept of fathers as providers is still at the centre of the fatherhood conceptualisation and often alienates men who are unable to live up to it. The next section discusses the responses of fatherless fathers and mothers to fatherhood.

### *Fatherless fathers*

The strict apartheid regime and the concomitant disruption in family life and structure often meant that families were forced either to send their children to urban areas in order to provide them with better access to education or to send their children back to the rural areas from the urban areas in order to remove them from the urban areas where violent protests were taking place (Khewu & Ada 2015; Richter, Chikovore & Makusha 2010). The ability or inability of fathers either to resist or respond to historical events had a bearing on whether children grow up in a resident or non-resident father household. The reference to the apartheid regime is important in this section as the regime bred a vicious cycle of fatherlessness (Eddy et al. 2013). Studies have shown that men who grew up without a father are more likely to abandon their children compared to those who grew up with a father (White 1994; Eddy et al. 2013). As Inniss (2013:22) states: “Father-presence is essential to the development of today’s children into tomorrow’s adults, who will invariably be tomorrow’s parents”.

### *Mothers on fatherhood*

The mothers themselves also had a choice of either resisting or responding to social changes and historical events. Mothers tended to respond in one of three ways: Firstly, by rearing their children in rural areas whilst the husband went in search of employment in the mining industries, secondly, by denying the father access to the children if the father did not live up to the provider construction of fatherhood, for example by resorting to the maintenance court and cultural expectations such as the payment of damages and, finally, by not disclosing the paternity of their children. There may also be other ways in which the mothers’ responses have perpetuated the current crisis of absent father households. The first two ways of



responding have been discussed but not the non-disclosure of mothers to their children about the paternity of their fathers. Fathers are not always to blame for being absent in their children's lives, as unlike in the case of mothers, it is not always easy to detect the paternity if the mother chooses not to disclose it. In South Africa, an unmarried mother is not obliged by the law to disclose the child's father on the child's official birth certificate (Manyatshe 2013; Padi, Nduna, Khunou & Kholopane 2014). Padi et al. (2014) highlight that, because of the recent emphasis in South Africa on an unabridged birth certificate, children depend on their mothers disclosing the identity of the father. In some cases mothers may choose not to disclose this information in order to conceal the circumstances that may have led to the child's birth, for example, incest, impregnation by a married man or simply as a way in which to protect the child from the father, especially if the father was abusive during the relationship. According to Nduna (2014a), a young person may also avoid inquiring about the paternity of the fathers out of fear of generating hostility between that young person and the mother. However, choosing not to disclose the identity of the child's biological father is one of the factors contributing to the phenomenon of non-resident fathers.

### **2.2.3. Historical times**

Historical times is mainly based on Cabrera, Tamis-Lemoda, Bradley, Hofferth & Lamb's (2000; 127) conception that "[s]ocial and historical context shape both popular and scholarly conception of children, parenting, so it is important to view our contemporary understanding of family relationship in light of recent history". In South Africa, as in many countries around the world, men's work and family roles and responsibility have been shaped by the history of social and economic oppression and by racial conflicts and segregation (Roy 2008). During the 19th and 20th centuries social and historical changes took place that affected the norms and expectations of good fathering. In the United States men left their farms and small businesses in order to seek employment in an emerging industrial economy, usually away from home (Helman 2015; Cabrerra, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth & Lamb 2000).

Likewise, in South Africa gold and diamonds were discovered during the 1800s with the resulting job opportunities attracting men to the mines.

After World War II, the Afrikaner-led government in South Africa codified a system to segregate South Africans along racial lines. This system became widely known as *apartheid* (Roy 2008). The basis of this system was to separate institutions including, among others, schools, work opportunities, transportation and public spaces. This system played a significant historical role in relation to fatherhood as it explicitly divided men and their families based on privilege which was defined by race. The resultant disruption to family life was intensified during the 1960s and 1970s when the state implemented the Group Areas Act 1950. According to Wilson (2005), this caused greater destruction to family life than migrant labour. In terms of this Act, the urban areas were divided into racially segregated zones "where members of one specific race alone could live and work". African communities were forcibly removed from their homes and forced to resettle in homesteads. According to Hunter (2006), laws such as the Group Areas Act, Pass Laws and restricted hiring practices continued to limit the opportunities for men to live with their children.

These historical events in South Africa have shaped fatherhood among Black Africans. Non-resident fathers continue to exist to this day due to the legacies left by the migrant system and the repressive laws of apartheid. Although many of these have been changed, several South Africans continue to work as migrants and live away from their families (Rabe 2006).

#### **2.2.4. Linked lives**

According to Kok (2007), the principle of linked lives highlights that life courses are interdependent and that the transitions of one family member have ramifications for entire families, for example, the absence of the father in the family. A father's relationship to his daughter is linked to his personal choices, role transitions and also social and historical changes (Roy 2008). The statement below best captures the social interdependence of fathers at multiple levels:

Fathers' role transition through work and family domains shape their children's role

transition through the same domain. For example, the consistency and duration of father involvement, due to divorce or job loss, may shape the nature of children's identities, their entry into the workforce, or their establishment of families (Bengtson & Allen, 1980: 500)

The life course perspective emphasises that the transition of one person in the family affects the entire family while according to the principle of linked lives, the father's absence due to the factors mentioned above is linked with both the child's general outcome as well as the child's outlook on the world and on life. According to Ramphele (2002), absent fatherhood is interconnected with the child's moral and emotional development and, thus, fatherless children are likely to experience emotional problems and may even display problem behaviour such as substance abuse and delinquency

Central to the principle of linked lives is the concept of the intergenerational link between parents and their children, which often persists throughout the life course (Macmillan & Copher 2005). For example, Popenoe (1996) contends that most fatherless children have difficulty raising their own children and often also maintaining relationships with their spouses over a long period. Lesch & Ismael (2014) argue, however, that it is important to explore both the possible negatives and positives related to father absence. According to Swartz & Bhana (2009), teenage fathers raised in fatherless households tend to use the discomfort of being raised in such homes as the motivation for being present in their children's lives, while Jordan (1990) maintains that fathers often use the negative experiences of their childhood as a way of not making the same mistakes their fathers made.

### **2.3. Conclusion**

This chapter outlined the life course theory, touching on the history, the development and the basic principles of the theory. Life course perspective recognises the importance of timing in lives through various life events and emphasises the importance of the age at which certain transitions occur in an individual's life. There is no denying that early transitions such as teenage pregnancy, parental divorce and parental death may significantly affect later

transition. However, individual choice also plays a key role in the extent to which earlier transitions affect young women in later transitions. The chapter also discussed how the theory outlines the importance of choosing to either resist or respond to the challenges experienced by young children and mothers as a result of living in father absent households as well as how fatherless fathers often respond once they reach the trajectory of fatherhood. The influence of historical times in a life course also plays an important role. For example, the harsh political times that fathers in South Africa experienced the 1950s prevented many from actively playing the role of a father. It is, therefore, important to understand fatherhood among black Africans within this context. However, with the concept of new fatherhood (discussed at length in **section 3.3**) fathers are seen to be taking a more active role in the lives of their children. In addition, a life course perspective emphasises the importance of understanding the historical landscape in which fathers find themselves when fatherhood is discussed. There is also no doubt that an individual's life in a household is interlinked with the lives of others in the household, and the absence of one member in the household may have dire consequence for those left behind. Thus, the absence of a father, especially if he is a sole breadwinner, may affect the socioeconomic status of the family. It must, however, also be borne in mind that individuals may go through the same life events (death of a father, divorce) but the response may be different for each individual. The next chapter presents the literature review.

## Chapter 3: Literature Review

### 3.1. Introduction

As stated, South Africa has one of the highest rates of father absence in the world (Richter et al. 2012:2). It has been found that 54% of men between the ages 15–49 are fathers but that almost half of these men are absent from their children's lives (Eddy et al. 2013). Statistics South Africa reported that approximately a third of South African preschool children live with both their parents in the same home (StatsSA 2011). There are a number of factors contributing to the existence of non-resident father households. These factors include labour migration, divorce, death and unemployment and are discussed in more detail below.

### 3.2. Definition of a father

The term 'father' carries multiple meanings, conceptualisations and patterns. According to Morrell (2006), the understanding of a father as a man who impregnates a woman limits fatherhood simply to the biological conception of the child. Morrell (2006) continues that this definition is, therefore, restrictive as there have been technological advancements such as artificial insemination that make it possible for a woman to conceive without two people having engaged in sexual intercourse. South African literature is now beginning to take up the position of fatherhood as more than just a reproductive role (Richter et al. 2006; Clowes, Ratele & Shefer 2013). This stance may have resulted from the fact that in South Africa, fatherhood is problematised further by the number of non-resident fathers in South Africa and, indeed, in the world (see statistics above in **section 3 Introduction**). It is thus evident that fatherhood should not be limited to biological fathers only. Makusha et al. (2012) contend that throughout Southern Africa and indeed in other parts of the world, men are fulfilling the role of fathering without necessarily being biological fathers but also as social fathers, including the uncles, grandfathers, older brothers and stepfathers who carry the responsibility of child-rearing in the absence of the biological father and, sometimes, in his presence (Mkhize 2006). The frequency with which parents separate also contributes to men other than biological fathers

having to assume the role of social fathering (Dunn 2004; Makusha et al. 2012; Makofane 2015), thus making this type of fathering as important as biological fathering.

Given this fact and due to the prevalence of absent fathers in Southern Africa and the world, the concept of social father has emerged strongly. According to Makusha et al. (2012), throughout Southern Africa it is recognised that men fulfilling the fatherhood role are often not the biological fathers but, instead, they are stepfathers, uncles, grandfathers, mothers' partners, prominent figures within the area and even men on the street who have the child's interest at heart with these men being known as social fathers. According to Allen & Connor (1997) and Makusha et al. (2012), social fathers have become important as they have responded to the ongoing disruptions in the society caused by, among others, migration, political and economic instability and paternal death. Makusha et al. (2012) argue that the involvement of a social father is beneficial for the child's well-being.

There are a number of definitions of father absence in the literature (Makofane 2015; Eddy et al. 2013; East, Jackson & O'Brien 2006; Mancini 2010; Mdletshe 2014). However, all these definitions touch on two aspects, namely, a father's physical and/or emotional absence. Makofane (2015:4) defines father absence as the "physical and emotional absence of a biological father during the [child's] childhood and/or adolescence due to parental relationship breakdown". Based on this definition the terms absent father and non-resident father may be used interchangeably. Furthermore, for the purposes of this study, a non-resident father refers to a biological father who is physically absent from the household due to situations such as divorce, instability, migrant work, death, imprisonment, disappearance or no knowledge of being a father. This raises questions about the perceptions of young women of the usefulness of a father's physical presence in the household.

### **3.3. The prevalence of non-resident fathers**

South Africa has the second highest rate of non-resident fathers in Africa after Namibia (Makusha & Richter 2015). As reported above, studies indicate one father out of two is absent in a child's life and that 50% of all fathers between the ages of 15 and 49 do not have any

daily contact with their children (Richter & Morrell, as cited in Eddy 2013, Thomson-De Boor & Mphaka 2013). The General Household Survey (StatsSA 2013:25) established that 42.5% of these children below the age of five live with a biological mother. However, the challenges of fatherlessness continue into the teenage years. According to Eddy et al. (2013), only 53% of African children under the age of 15 live in the same household as their biological fathers, followed by 83% and 85% of white and Indian children, respectively. It would thus seem that African fathers are disappearing in large numbers, leaving women and children to fend for themselves.

Father absence may also be determined by the number of paternal orphans. According to the 2011 census, 3 374 971 of children between the ages 0 and 17 were reported as being orphans. Of these, 15.4% were paternal orphans, while 7.1% were maternal orphans (StatsSA, 2011). The incidence of maternal orphans doubled during the decade 2001 to 2011, from 3.6% to 7.1% (StatsSA 2011). Previous research has shown that an increase in maternal orphans also increases double orphans as the fathers, although alive, often disappear from their children's lives (Meintjies & Hall 2012).

### **3.4. Conceptualisation of fatherhood**

According to Popenoe (1996), throughout history fathers have been considered as an integral component of the family. Hunter (2006) documented their importance in the 19th century and argues that fathering and fatherhood among the Zulu people was linked primarily with building a home. However, Coleman & Ganong (2015) argue that the construction of fatherhood has changed in the past 30 to 40 years and, thus, that with these changes in the construction comes a change in the expectation of men's role as fathers. Rabe (2006) adds that this emerging conceptualisation of fatherhood goes beyond the role of fathers as breadwinners. According to Marsiglio, there has been an emergence of a "new father" in the 21<sup>st</sup> century with three major roles being linked to fatherhood in South Africa and many other countries around the world, namely, fathers as patriarchs, fathers as financial providers and a "new fatherhood" concept (Rabe 2006; Coleman & Ganong 2015). Fatherhood is socially constructed and,

therefore, it changes over time (Eddy et al. 2013) and, hence, the importance of the above roles has also changed over time. These changes in the concept of fatherhood have increased our understanding and, ultimately, our construction of what and whom a father should be. Paschal, Lewis-Moss & Hsiao (2001) further argues that these changes also provide fathers with a multiplicity of ways in which they may be fathers, thus giving them the opportunity to construct fatherhood from their individual viewpoints.

#### **3.4.1 Fathers as patriarchs**

Historically a father was conceptualised as a moral teacher and a guide (Lamb, as quoted in Eddy et al. 2013). In Southern Africa the father, as the patriarch, was at the apex of the hierarchical system (Lesejane 2006). Clowes et al. (2013:261) add that “embedded in the construction of men as household heads and leaders across public terrain are notions of strength, independence and self-sufficiency, dominance and control”. Clowes et al. (2013) continue that the notion of patriarchy suggests that masculinity is powerful and that men are in control of women and children. Thus, the father, as the head of the family, had to be told everything happening within the family. The task of providing moral guidance fell to the father and, in his absence, to the eldest son. However, socio-cultural and political changes stripped the man of this authority and in turn changed the conception of fatherhood in many Southern African cultures (Lesejane 2006). A research study conducted by Eddy et al. (2013) found that the respondents who were absent fathers perceived their children’s disrespect and lack of morality a consequence of their absence. Furthermore, Eddy et al. (2013) also found that certain men felt they no longer have authority over their children. Thus, the construction of fathers as moral teachers and guides had shifted drastically.

#### **3.4.2 Fathers as providers and protectors**

The discovery of gold and diamonds in South Africa during 1800s forced many black males to leave their families and work as migrant labourers (Morrell & Richter 2006). This left the women with the responsibility of raising children. This resulted in the construction of fathers as providers coming to the fore (Cabrerria et al. 2000). Rabe (2006) maintains that the



construction of fathers as financial providers is the most significant construction in many communities in South Africa. Therefore, as Shaw & Gerstel (as quoted in Kelly 2013) state, employment and the ability to provide for their families and children became central to men's construction of fatherhood. In terms of African cultures "a man is a man because he can provide for his family" (Mkhize 2006:186). Clowes et al. (2013) reflect that a good father is viewed as man who is able to provide financially for and effectively protect the family from economic turmoil. However, high unemployment rates, poverty and HIV/AIDS have disempowered most men and denied them the possibility of meeting the provider expectation (Hunter 2006; Wessels & Lesch 2014).

Lesch & Ismail (2014) found that, more than protection from financial hardship, fathers in low-income communities feel the need to protect their children, especially girls, from the outside world. In particular, fathers feel their daughters need protection from predatory men.

### **3.4.3 New fatherhood**

The role of the father in the household has shifted over the past few decades. During the 1970s the focus shifted from fathers as just disciplinarians and breadwinners to a new conception known as "new father" and in terms of which fathers were more involved in the well-being of their children than previously (Ritcher et al. 2012; Rabe 2006; Lamb 2000). The concept originated from the perception of men in middle socioeconomic class in countries such United State of America during the 1920s (Griswold 1993). According to Smit (2006), this new notion of fathering included fathers becoming nurturers and more involved in their children's lives. Smit (2008) argues that one of the major contributory factors to masculine domesticity was the rise of feminism during the 1920s. Pleck, Lamb & Levine (1986) further argue that the marked entrance of women into the labour market has also been one of the factors that has led to increased masculine domesticity. According to Rabe (2006), there is not sufficient literature South Africa on the "new father" concept. However, existing literature in South Africa does show that men are beginning to embrace this concept. According to Morrell, as cited in Rabe (2006), there is evidence that young, black, professional males are

developing patterns of what a “new father” should be. Richter et al. (2012) contend that fathers are beginning to share household chores with their partners and participating in the active upbringing of the children. Men are increasingly beginning to attend health care centres for children’s immunisations and taking an active role in the day to day lives of their children, from driving them to school to caring for them at home (Richter, 2006). According to Troilo (2014), approximately 90% of fathers in the United States of America are now present in delivery rooms and they are changing napkins. Walker (1995) has attributed this shift in men’s roles to the new conceptualisation of motherhood. The rate at which women are entering the workforce has increased significantly and this is changing gender roles and responsibilities. White (1994) and Roy (2008) are of the view that this is creating new opportunities for father involvement. On the other hand, Edin & Kefalas (2005) argue that many working women in low-income families depend less on men for assistance, realising the inability or limitation of their partners to provide for the family.

### **3.5. Fatherhood involvement**

The operationalisation of paternal involvement has shifted over time (Lamb 2000). One of the earliest conceptualisations of father involvement which emerged was the Lamb, Pleck, Charnov & Levine (1987) model. This model conceptualises father involvement by distinguishing between three modalities, namely, engagement, accessibility and responsibility. Although the Lamb et al. model was useful as it provided the basis of much research into the father involvement, it has also been the subject to much criticism although various scholars have built on this early conceptualisation of father involvement. According to Schoppe-Sullivan, McBride & Ringo Ho (2004), overdependence on the Lamb et al model has led to “the limited, more unidimensional view of this construct that is prevalent in the research literature”. Accordingly, Palkovits (2002) called for an expansion and reconstruction of the concept of father involvement.

Marsiglio, Day & Lamb (2008) highlight the following three dimensions of fatherhood, namely, paternal motivation, paternal involvement and paternal influence. Eddy et al. (2013) defines

the three dimensions as follows: Paternal motivation refers to the factors that drive men to participate in their children's lives – these factors include, among others, the love a man has for his children, societal pressure to act as a masculine male and a father's perception of his child's financial needs. The second dimension, paternal involvement, includes four aspects, namely, engagement, accessibility, responsibility and cognitive representation. These four aspects of paternal involvement form a pivotal role in our understanding of the concept of fatherhood involvement. According to Schoppe-Sullivan et al. (2004) and Eddy et al (2013), engagement involves direct, one-on-one interactions between the father and child in activities such as playing, feeding etc. Accessibility refers to a father assuming activities regarding supervision, being physically and psychologically available to the child and providing financial support to the child while responsibility refers to the father taking responsibility and finally a sense of duty in relation to the child's welfare and wellbeing. According to Eddy et al. (2013), some researchers are of the view that responsibility, which is often neglected in surveys, is the most important aspect of paternal involvement, both for resident and non-resident fathers. Cognitive representation of involvement refers to the father's state of mind about the child and includes worry, anxiety and contingency planning that relates to the child's wellbeing. The final dimension is paternal influence which refers to nurturing and provision of care by a father to a child.

### **3.6. Importance of men in their role as fathers**

Fathers are an important component of the family (Mkhize 2004) with literature attributing the presence of the father to the positive, developmental outcome of a child (Swartz, Bhana, Richter & Versfeld 2013). Paternal presence and involvement have been found to be important in the socioeconomic and psychological wellbeing of girls, starting from birth and continuing even into adulthood (Haaz, Kneavel & Browning 2014; Amato 1994; Verschueren, & Marcoen 1999). Research has found that father involvement and nurturance are positively associated with a daughter's ability to be self-reliant, self-confident and emphasise and display greater life satisfaction than may otherwise have been the case (Lesch et al., 2014; Secunda 1992).

In addition, daughters are able to successfully form and maintain relationships (both platonic and romantic) and adjust better to school stressors (Verschueren, et al., 1999). The following statement by Blankenhorn captures the paternal role succinctly:

A father plays a distinctive role in shaping a daughter's sexual style and her understanding of the male-female bond. A father's love and involvement builds a daughter's confidence in her own femininity and contributes to her sense that she is worth loving (Blankenhorn 1996:11).

Research has also found female children raised by a loving and caring father tend to avoid risky behaviour. According to Haaz et al. (2014), daughters who have little or no contact with their fathers engage in sexual activity at an early age and are more likely to fall pregnant than their counterparts. In addition, fathers play a role as a protective shield against the manifestation of eating disorders among adolescent girls as well as the use and abuse drugs.

### **3.7. Why fathers seem to be disappearing from children's lives**

Richter et al. (2012) state that the reasons for a father's absence from a child's life include migrant labour, the resulting fluidity of family life, delayed marriage due to *lobola* requirements, gender-based violence, divorce and the growing autonomy of South African women. Research has also shown that factors such as divorce, abandonment and death all affect children's perceptions and outlook on life in different ways (Krohn & Bogan 2002). In addition, the age at which a daughter lost a father is also a significant predictor of the developmental challenges a female may potentially experience (Krohn & Bogan 2011). The next section will unpack some of the reasons cited above.

#### **3.7.1. Marriage and cohabitation**

Marriage as an institution has, over the years, played a critical role in the shaping of families in South Africa (Kalule-Sibiti, Palamuleni, Makiwane & Amoateng 2007). Kalule-Sibiti et al. (2007) continue that, among the many cultural traditions in South Africa, a key process in marriage is the *lobola* negotiations. This is a process that involves the prospective

bridegroom's family paying a bride-price as a token of appreciation to the bride's family for having raised and nurtured their son's future wife (Hunter 2006, Kalule-Sibiti et al. 2007). In pre-colonial time, this payment of cows usually came from the son's father's herd. However, as many researchers have indicated, in postcolonial times *lobola* has become commercialised with families continuing to demand large amounts of money from the prospective husband's family although, on the other hand, the husband's family no longer contributes to paying the *lobola*, thus leaving the future husband to raise the money on his own (Kalule-Sibiti et al. 2007). In South Africa, the economic and political turmoil which resulted from the apartheid regime is one explanation which has been offered for decline marriage rates (Posel et al., 2012, Moore & Govender 2013).

Marriage patterns have continued to fluctuate in the post-apartheid South Africa. From 2008 to 2012 there was a huge decline in the number of civil marriages with 186 522 (the highest in the decade) civil marriages being registered in 2008 as compared to 161 112 in 2012 (Statistics South Africa, 2012). In South Africa the marriage rates differ significantly according to race, for example, African women of all ages are less likely ever to be married compared to white women (Posel & Rudwick, 2013, Moore & Govender, 2013). Hunter (2010) adds that marriage rates in South Africa and other parts of the world such as the United States have been dropping since 1960.

Hunter (2004), Hosegood, McGrath & Moultrie (2009), Ramphele (2002), Russell (2003) and Posel (2009) have attributed this decline in marriage to the economic nature of South Africa, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, globalisation, urbanisation, rural to urban migration and high *lobola* payments. In addition, Posel et al. (2012) use two interrelated factors found in the literature to further explain the decline in marriage. Firstly, while the economic position of men has declined women's academic accomplishments have increased, thus increasing the entry of women in the labour market. Secondly, the attitude towards marriage has changed and this has reduced the pressure on people to marry.

According to Thornton & Young-DeMarco (2001), in the main cohabitation is increasing in

countries in which the marriage rates are dropping. In South Africa, the high cost of *lobola* forces, in particular, poorer couples to live together instead of marrying (Kalule-Sibiti et al., 2007). This, therefore, suggests that cohabitation is fast becoming an acceptable form of partnership. The White Paper on Families in South Africa defines cohabitation as a union in which two adults stay together without any contractual agreements, with or without children (Department of Social Development 2013). According to Mokomane (2004), South Africa, Botswana and Namibia are some of the Southern African countries that have experienced a rise of cohabitation in the last few decades. There is still no clear agreement in the literature of race disparity in relation to cohabitation. Hosegood et al. (as cited in Moore & Govender 2013) suggest that white women cohabit more than their black counterparts while Posel et al. (2012) found that the number of black women who are not married and who are cohabitating was much lower when compared to that of whites. However, regardless of the gap between unmarried black and married white women and cohabitating white women and non-cohabitating black women of the same age, the likelihood of becoming mothers is the same across both races (Posel et al. 2012). Studies show that, in South Africa, children are more at risk of being exposed to poverty if the mother is not married or is not cohabiting (Posel et al 2013, Posel et al. 2012). Thus, a father's presence in a household may be linked to the economic well-being of a child. In South Africa there is a close link between poverty and single parent household (Mkhize 2006) and, thus, there is clearly a strong relationship between household income and expenditure and father involvement.

### **3.7.2. Unemployment and culture**

The unemployment rate in South Africa has increased drastically since 1994. At the time of the study South Africa had one of the highest rates of unemployment in the world (Burger & Fintel, 2009). There has been a steady rise in unemployment in the country since the 1970s (Seekings & Natrass 2006). According to Statistics South Africa, the unemployment rate during the first quarter (Jan–Mar) of 2015 stood at 26.7% (StaSA 2016). Employment is particularly scarce for black South Africans (Magruder 2010). According to Statistics South

Africa (2016), the unemployment rate among black Africans increased from 29.7% in the first quarter (Jan-March) of 2015 to 30.1% during the same quarter in 2016, while the unemployment rate among coloureds increased by 0.3% from 23.3% in the first quarter of 2015 to 23.6% in the first quarter of 2016. On the other hand, the unemployment rate of whites remained constant at 7.2%, while the unemployment rate for Indians dropped by 3.2% from 15.7% to 12.5% over the period cited above. Mkhize (2006) and Roy (2008) argue that black South African men are having to compete with men of other racial groups without the necessary skills and education in a shrinking economy and with limited opportunities. These high levels of unemployment are affecting young black men in the country. Magruder (2010; 63) contends that:

While unemployment has remained high in South Africa since at least the late 1970s, the distribution of unemployment has changed substantially since the fall of apartheid. Unemployment durations have become longer, suggesting that economic opportunities are worsening for the unemployed. This decline in mobility seems especially surprising given the increase in de jure economic opportunity available to non-whites after apartheid ended.

As highlighted by Eddy et al. (2013), unemployment and poverty are closely linked in South Africa and both have a direct bearing on fatherhood. Being a provider and protector are considered by many as the criteria for good fathering. Research conducted by Rabe (2006) found that mineworkers considered providing financially for their children as a core function of fatherhood. However, the high unemployment rate in South Africa means that many African males are unable to assume the provider responsibility linked with fatherhood. A number of studies have shown that men tend to avoid their children if they fail to live up to the provider expectation (Richter et al. 2010; Eddy et al. 2013). According to Rabe (2006), studies by Erasmus in the 1970s, Møller in the 1980s and Spiegel & Mehlwana in the 1990s, all found that fathers feel useless if they are not able to provide financially for their families. Thus, a father who is unable to provide for his family or his children feels emasculated if he is not

fulfilling his role as a father (Eddy et al 2013). According to Richter, Chikovore & Makusha (2010), whether or not a man lives with his children is linked with income with men in the high earnings category being three times more likely than their lower earning male counterpart to live with their children.

A study conducted in Johannesburg, entitled: “So we are ATM fathers” by Eddy et al. (2013), found that the majority of men succumb to the pressure of the provider expectations with the study reporting that most absent fathers lived in poor townships in marginalised communities. The study further found that, for some fathers, despite their willingness to be part of their children’s lives, their lack of financial and material resources was incapacitating them. Thus, this pressure on men to be automatic teller machines (ATMs) robs them of an opportunity to be involved in their children’s lives.

Coupled with unemployment are the traditional expectations of African fathers. It is customary in African tradition that men pay an obligatory *inhlawulo* (a Zulu word meaning the paying of damages for impregnating a girl or women out of wedlock) and failing to do so means that the maternal family is allowed to deny the father access to the child (Eddy et al. 2013; Tawanda & Richter 2015). This amount that ranges from R500 to R10 000 and is paid by the paternal side to the maternal side as an atonement on behalf of their son for impregnating a woman out of wedlock (Dayimani 2016). Many African cultures also dictate that *lobola* (bride-price) should be paid before a man is permitted to marry a woman. Previously *lobola* was payable in livestock, however, modern *lobola* negotiations have centred on reimbursing the bride’s parents for, among other things, their daughter’s education and expenses incurred in raising their daughter (Richter et al. 2010). The high cost of *lobola* is, thus, one of the reasons why marriage rates are dropping and fathers disappearing from their children’s lives. These traditions pose a problem as they require monetary payments and, thus, for unemployed men this may delay the process of becoming a resident father.



### 3.7.3. Migrant labour

Migrant labour has been part of the South African history for a long time. According to Kok, Gelderblom, Oucho & Van Zyl (2006), the discovery of diamond and gold in the latter years of the 19th century, together with industrialisation, lured men from the Southern African region to leave their families and homes to join the migrant labour system. However, Kok et al. (2006) insist that the migrant labour system was established before the discovery of diamonds in Kimberly during the 1860s as the Bapedi from Sekhukhuneland and the Basotho from Lesotho had already been involved in labour migration on the farms of the Cape Colony and Orange Free State respectively. The reasons why men opted for labour migration at the time varied from the accumulation of capital to buying rifles in preparation for the significant external threat from the military, paying bride-wealth (*lobola*) and paying for agricultural implements (Turrell, cited in Kok et al. 2006).

The discovery of gold in 1886 on the Witwatersrand was preceded by the opening of the Kimberly diamond fields, thus creating a huge demand for unskilled labour (Harington, McGlashan & Chelkowska 2004; Wentzel & Tlabela 2006). Compared to the Kimberley diamond fields, gold reefs in South Africa were generally very deep, the mineral was of a low grade and production costs were high (Kok et al. 2006). It was thus necessary for the mining industry to source cheap labour and it is for this reason that the industry employed black migrant workers on a large scale (Rabe 2006). Furthermore, in order to ensure productivity the supply of labour had to be both adequate and stable and, thus, after recruitment the mineworkers were accommodated in hostels in which the ethnic groups were segregated (Rabe 2006; Harington et al. 2004; Kok et al. 2006; Cox, Hemson & Todes 2004). Harington et al. (2004) classify these mineworkers in three political categories, namely, men from within the borders of South Africa including the homelands; men from the former High Commissions (such as Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland) and men from foreign countries such as Mozambique, Angola, and Zambia. The number of Black Africans employed on the gold mines escalated from approximately 14 000 to 97 000 between 1890 and 1899 (Lang 1986). More

than a century later, Schiel (2014) reported that 18.7 million individuals from the developing countries had relocated to cities between 2007 and 2012. In South Africa, 17% of the households are reported to have at least one migrant labourer (Posel & Casele cited in Schiel 2014).

This period of labour shortage is significant as it entrenched the migrant labour system with the practice intensifying over time (Rabe 2006). The establishment of this system was important for family life for a number of reasons, firstly, fathers were forced to leave their families for longer periods of time and, at times, the fathers were able to pay one annual visit home only (Richter & Morrell 2006; Madhavan & Schatz 2007; Crush, Jeeves & Yudelman 1991). In Lesotho, for example, more than half of the country's GDP came from migrant miners with young men leaving their families in search for work on the South African mines (Harington et al. 2004). The problem was exacerbated by the fact that black men were not allowed, by law, to have permanent residence in urban areas and nor were they allowed to bring their families with them (Posel & Devey 2006).

According to Mathews, Jewkes & Abrahams (2011), the development of *apartheid* was characterised by the white minority implementing oppressive laws against the black majority. The system of *apartheid* used legislation such the Land Act of 1913 to increase the supply of migrant workers by reducing the availability of land to Africans (Walker 1995). In addition, the colonial powers forced household members to engage in paid work in order to pay the taxes imposed, thus forcing many black men to seek employment on the gold reef mines and in the other large labour sectors (Horowitz 2001). The increase in the gold price as a result of the global regulation of a fixed gold price meant higher wages and longer contracts for migrant labourers from the 1970s onwards (Rabe 2006).

The migrant labour system in South Africa was, thus, one of the major contributors to the prevalence of non-resident fathers in South Africa. Research has shown that labour migration has dire consequences for those left behind, especially the women and children (Posel 2003; Hall 2010). The migrant labour system continues to affects families in South Africa, primarily

because of increasing demand for skills in the country. As result of the end of civil wars in many African countries and the end of apartheid in South Africa, men have continued to leave their families to join migrant labour. According to Schiel (2014:9), “gravitational flow has begun replacing the circular flow of migration” as a result the large number of migrants who are no longer interested in returning to their home countries and, thus, family members are joining the migrants in their new established homes.

Other reasons cited by Tawanda et al. (2015) and Rabe (2006) as to the reasons why fathers form part of the migrant labour system and leave their families behind is that the system has become institutionalised although often with precarious working conditions that prevent fathers from relocating with their families to the more expensive urban areas. Accordingly, South Africa is characterised by fragmented families, female and child-headed households and skip-families (Hall 2010) with fathers, unfortunately, being marginalised.

#### **3.7.4. Mothers as gatekeepers**

The degree to which fathers are involved in their children’s lives is also significantly affected by the attitude of the mothers (Molongoana 2015). A large number of fathers argue that gatekeeping is one of the major reasons why they are absent from their children’s lives. Research conducted on this subject reveals that, in some instances, the mothers act as gatekeepers between the fathers and children (Molongoana 2015; DeCuzzi & Lamb 2004; Eddy et al. 2013; Nielson 2012). There exists a close link between the quality of the relationship between the parents after the separation and the degree to which mothers restrict their children from forming bonds with the fathers. It has also been observed that mothers are more likely to play gatekeeper in conflict-ridden break-ups (Nielson 2012). In South Africa, for example, certain fathers indicate that children are used as weapons because the mother wants to punish the father (Khunou 2006). In her study, “Fathers don’t stand a chance”, Khunou (2006) found that all ten of the participants in the study had attempted to gain access to their children, in some cases even through litigation. However, in many of these cases, the fathers express how this process had further damaged their relations with their ex-partners. This

breakdown in ex-partners' relations is often linked to the father's absence. Nielson (2011:164) states that "This may happen because women tend to hold on to grudges longer than [ex-partners]. Women also tend to ruminate more about failed relationships and to stay angrier than men". In an effort to retaliate fathers often stop paying maintenance in instances where the mothers are acting as gatekeepers. The large number of maintenance defaulters may, in fact, be an indication of the fathers retaliating (Eddy et al. 2013).

One of the major reasons why mothers succeed in gatekeeping is because fathers are often not aware of their parental rights and responsibilities as prescribed by the Children's Act of 2005. Sections 20 and 21 of the Children Act 38 (Act 38 of 2005) specify the parental rights of both married and unmarried father respectively, while section 23 specifies the procedure that should be followed when claiming paternity of a child (Children Act, 2005). However, section 21(3)(a), as quoted below, is important to this section:

If there is a dispute between the biological father referred in subsection (1) and the biological mother of the child with regards to the fulfilment by that father of the conditions set out in subsections 1(a) and (b), the matter must be referred for mediation to a family advocate, social worker, social service professional or suitably qualified person (Children's Act 2005:28).

Subsections 1(a) and (b) states simply that a father shall be referred to as a father if he was living with the mother at the time the child was born or if he agrees to be identified as the father of the child by applying for a paternity test in terms of section 26 of the Children's Act, pays damages in terms of customary law, attempts in good faith to contribute towards the upbringing of the child and/or attempts, in good faith, to pay for expenses of the child, such as paying maintenance of a period of time (Children's Act 2005).

Nevertheless, as a gatekeeper, the mother may be acting in the best interests of the child. According to Manyatshe (2016), the literature shows a relationship between domestic violence and father absence. It is estimated that, on a monthly basis, approximately 60 000 women and children in South Africa are victims of physical violence at the hands of the mother's intimate

partner (Bower & Dawes 2014). In a survey conducted by Burton & Leoschut (2013), 22% of the targeted adolescents reported having experienced intimate partner violence at home. Bower & Dawes (2014) further indicate that a South African study conducted in 2009 found that 44.5% of child homicides were as a result of abuse and neglect.

On the basis of these high levels of domestic violence, Van den Berg et al. (2013) argue that a mother's choice to restrict the father's involvement in a child's life may be to protect the child from violence. Domestic violence refers to the "intimate context within which one partner is abused by another, involving both men and women as victims and same sex partner violence" (Holt, Buckley & Whelan 2008:798). However, this definition fails to capture the fact that domestic violence is more likely to be perpetrated by men on women than the other way around. In light of the lack of evidence on the subject of domestic violence and the number of cases that are unreported, it is difficult to establish accurate statistics. According to a South African study conducted in three provinces, 24.6% of women have experienced domestic violence (Helman & Ratele 2016). People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) state that one in every six women killed in Gauteng alone is as a result of domestic violence and, furthermore, that one in every four women in South Africa is abused by a romantic partner.

Previous reports on domestic violence found children to be silent witnesses to domestic violence. However, in recent qualitative research contrary evidence was found (McIntosh 2002). Children have not only been found to be dynamic in their efforts to make sense of their experiences but a number of children have also reported being victims of violence at the hands on their fathers (Mullender et al. 2002). Holt et al. (2008) state that a close link has been repeatedly found between women abuse and child abuse. In a study conducted by Mtetwa (2010), one of the participants shared her experience with paternal abuse as follows:

Until Standard ... I think I was doing Standard 8. That's when the problem started. I think my father lost his job. When he lost his job, that's when things started to change. It started with verbal abuse. Then the verbal abuse went down to us as children. And

then physical abuse, abusing my mother, and, ya ... And then extra-marital affairs.

Dad started having affairs, and that's where we started seeing a lot of changes.

Mtetwa (2010) concluded that the effect of paternal violence is closely associated with the forced maturity of children, self-blame and negative impacts on a girl's relationship with both parents and others. Furthermore, these negative consequences continue into adulthood for some of these girls. It is, thus, clear that, at times, mothers become gatekeepers as a way of protecting children from these dire consequences.

### **3.8. The effects absent fathers have on girl children**

According to Wessels et al. (2014), research shows that father involvement is essential for the development of a girl child. Although there is no clear correlation between a father's presence and positive outcomes in a child's life, there is, however, evidence that the absence of a father may impact negatively on the development of the child (Eddy et al. 2013).

The concepts of father presence, father absence and father involvement have dominated the literature in recent years (Lindegger 2006; Padi et al. 2014; Ritcher & Morrell 2006; Eddy et al. 2013). Much of the research has focused on conceptualising fatherhood. However, intensive and rigorous scholarly scrutiny is rare in the field of fathers and fatherhood as opposed to motherhood (Prinsloo 2006). There is, thus, a need for research into the effects of fatherlessness on girls in South Africa, although this has been well-documented in the West (Archer 2003; Hetherington 1972; Appleton 1981). Peyper, De Klerk & Spies (2015) argue that a few studies only have been carried out in non-Western countries and that many of these studies were in the field of psychology as opposed to sociology.

#### **3.8.1. Effects of divorce on children**

According to Lesch & Scheffler (2016), the effects of father absence as a result of divorce have been the focus of Western literature in recent years. However, research is also needed in the non-Western countries on the negative effects of father absence due to divorce, especially in South Africa where the rate of divorce is continuing to increase. Divorce rates in

South Africa have fluctuated from 2002 to 2012. During this decade the number of registered divorces was approximately 30 000 mark a year, with the highest divorce rate in a given year recorded in 2005 at 32 484 and the lowest in 2011 at 20 980 (StatsSA 2012; 22). The increase in both divorce rates and the breakdown of relationships in South Africa and in the world means that more children than before are growing up in father absent households. Statistics South Africa reports 21 998 divorces in South Africa and in which 12 083 (54.9%) involved children younger than 18 (StatsSA, 2012; 44). The black population had the highest number of children aged 18 and below affected by divorce (35.5%) and the white population the lowest (28.2%). In 2012, 12 083 (54.9%) of the 21 998 divorces involved children of 18 years and younger (StatsSA, 2012; 44).

Divorce is often traumatic for everyone involved, especially the children. However, it is worth noting that children do not necessarily respond in the same way to parental divorce and in fact the manner in which children respond to parental divorce is determined by factors such as the nature and frequency of the conflicts between parents, the age of the child at the time of the divorce, the gender of the child, the economic status of the family and the relationship between the child and the non-custodial parent (Bojuwore & Akpan 2009; Lefson 1997; Krohn & Bogan 2002). Nielson (2012) contends that most divorces that end with little or no conflict allow parents to make joint plans about the future of their children while divorces characterised by high conflict are usually very damaging to the children. According to Bojuwore & Okpan (2009), some children may react with anger, grief, fear and trauma while other may be either happy or indifferent. Nielson (2012) maintains that girls are more likely to feel unloved and rejected by their parents after a divorce compared to their male counterparts. In addition, girls are also more likely than boys to feel betrayed by a father after divorce (Nielson 2012). Horne (2011) contends that, as a result of family instability, girls tend to channel these feelings into their romantic relationships and, eventually, into marriage.

According to Nielson (2008), fathers usually remarry before mothers and this places a strain on their relationship with their daughters. According to Grimm-Wassil (1994), girls who lose

their father through divorce or abandonment often seek attention from older men and may also have more physical contact with boys their age. Grimm-Wassil (1994) goes on to say that these girls constantly seek refuge in the arms of these older men and use them to replace their missing fathers. Furthermore, the children of divorced parents also tend to also experience high rates of depression and may be overly aggressive towards both their male and female peers (Krohn & Brogan 2013; D'Onofrio 2011). The effects of divorce usually last into adulthood. When speaking about the long-term effects of divorce, D'Onofrio (2011:1) asserts that

Parental divorce is also associated with negative outcomes and earlier life transition as offspring enter young adulthood and later life. Children of divorce are more likely to experience poverty, educational failure, early and risky behaviour, sexual activity, non-marital childbirth, earlier marriage, cohabitation, marital discord and divorce.

In South Africa, as in most parts of the world such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America, females are still far more likely than males to win custody of their children (Dunn 2004; Haaz et al. 2014). This subject has also acquired prominence in the media in recent years. For example, In one article Poppy Louw (2013) argues that the courts continue to favour women when it comes to awarding custody of children as, in 90% of cases women are still being awarded custody. The article highlights how four fathers have filed a complaint with the Public Protector and Equality Court claiming the Family Advocate's office was discriminating against them on the basis of gender (Louw, 2013). Chauke et al. (2014) are of the view that the maintenance system in South African overlooks the emotional and psychosocial importance of the role that a father plays in his children's lives. Khunou (2006) further argues that fathers often do not stand a chance in maintenance court as the courts and law enforcers treat them merely as the providers of financial support with the fathers being required to pay maintenance.

### **3.8.2. Effects of paternal death on children**

According to Holborn & Eddy (2011) and Meintjies & Hall (2010), there were 9.1 million double



orphans (meaning both biological parents are dead) in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2005. It was found that 60% of these parental deaths were as the result of the HIV virus. The situation is the same in South Africa where Hall et al. (2014) reported that there were approximately 3.54 million orphans in South Africa in 2012. These statistics included children without a living mother, father or both parents. Approximately 60% of these children were paternal orphans (living with a mother), while 3% only were maternal orphans (living with a father). Hall et al. (2014) continue that the number of double orphans in South Africa had more than doubled since 2002 with approximately 810 000 children as double orphans in 2012 compared to 360 000 in 2002. Another important feature of AIDS orphans is that the fathers of maternal orphans are often unknown fathers (Atobrah 2004).

Paternal death has dire consequence for families, especially in the developing countries (Nduna & Jewkes, 2012). Various studies have been carried out on the impact a father's death on the children left behind with different conclusions being reached by studies in different parts of the world. A study conducted in Denmark found that paternal death, although devastating, has less effect on children than maternal death (Beekink, Van Poppel & Liefbroer 1999). However, a study conducted in South Africa found that paternal death before birth or during the first four years of a child's life was a significant factor in child mortality (Sartorius, Kahn, Collinson, Vounatsou & Tollman 2011). Furthermore, Ardington (2008) and Case & Ardington (2006) found a relationship between paternal death and the economic well-being of households. These households are likely to lack access to electricity, running water and hygienic toilets. In South Africa, researchers recently found that the loss of parents has adverse effects on the schooling outcomes of children (Molongoana 2015).

Although there is still a lot of variety as to the effects of paternal death on children, especially girls, there are, nevertheless, different behavioural dimensions in regard to fatherless girls on which researchers agree. According to Krohn & Bogan (2002), girls who are paternal orphans are usually quiet in the presence of male adults and they tend to shy away from making any physical contact with such male adults. This is particularly true in the case of females whose

fathers passed away before the girls had reached the age of five. However, there is a different reality for girl children who are maternal or double orphans. Research conducted in Uganda found the first sexual intercourse of double orphans to be earlier than that of non-orphans and that by the age of 12, 30% of the orphans were sexually active (Ellis et al. 2003).

In addition, Bhat (2014) reveals that orphanhood may lead to depression and poor mental health in children. Makame, Ani & McGregor (2002), Atwine, Cartor-Graae & Bajiniwe (2005) and Cluver & Gardner (2006) further state that orphans often display suicidal tendencies, anxiety and post-traumatic stress symptoms. Cluver et al. (2006) argue that, in informal housing, children often find themselves becoming the carers of HIV positive parents, thus exacerbating the death of parents and even causing post-traumatic stress in children.

### **3.8.3. Effects of father absence on relationships**

A father should be the first point of contact in a daughter's life in order to teach the girl child the acceptable way in which to behave in society. Peyper et al. (2015) outline the important role a father plays in his daughter's ability to form lasting relationships.

In 1990 Read and Collins conducted a study to determine whether there was a correlation between a father-daughter relationship and a daughter-romantic partner relationship. The study found that women who were raised by affectionate and appreciative fathers tend to date men who are also affectionate and appreciable while, on the other hand, women who were raised by absent, cold fathers or in absent father homes tended to date men who are cold and distant. Therefore, as Perkins (2001) argues, a father-daughter relationship is important in shaping the relationships into which girls enter in later in life.

Fathers also play a pivotal role in a daughter's psychosexual development (Lesch et al. 2016). A father's absence has been associated with negative sexual outcomes such as earlier menarche and pubertal timing, girls engaging in unsafe sex, sexual assertiveness and teenage pregnancy (Tither & Ellis 2008; Lesch et al. 2016). It is therefore not surprising that daughters who have little or no contact with their fathers engage in sexual activity at an early age and

are likely to fall pregnant (Haaz et al. 2014; Ellis et al. 2003, Nielsen 2012). It is widely accepted that pregnancy has negative consequences for young women, particularly those of school going age (Morrell, Bhana & Shefer 2012).

By the age of 17 almost half of South African teenagers are already sexually active (Jewkes, Morrell & Christofides 2009). Research shows that teenage fertility in South Africa may be approximated at between 54 and 65 per 1000 (Panday, Makiwane, Ranchod & Letsoalo 2009). The Department of Education released an official report showing that in 2007, 49 636 learners were pregnant (Morrell et al. 2012). It is reported that one in three girls has had a baby by the age of 20 (Chauke 2013). According to the 2014 General Household Survey 11, 9% of girl between the ages 14 and 19 were reported to be pregnant in 2013 (approximately 12 months before the survey) (StatsSA 2014).

However, Morrell et al. (2012) and Thobejane (2015) note that pregnancy is also linked with forced sexual practices such as rape, human trafficking or the male dominance that disables young women from negotiating about the use of condoms. Coupled with unsafe sexual behaviour among adolescent girls is the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, especially in South Africa. Jewkes & Morrell (2010) indicate that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is particularly high among girls in their late teenage years. Morrell et al. (2010) also state that more young black women are infected by HIV compared to their male counterparts. One in every five people living with HIV globally lives in South Africa Government (2017). This means that South Africa continues to be home to the world's largest HIV epidemic. Young people, especially adolescent girls and young women between the ages of 15-24 bear the brunt of this epidemic. According to Governemnt (2017), out of the estimated 270 000 new HIV infection in South Africa, 100 000 are young women between the ages 14-24.

#### **3.8.4. Academic performance of young girls**

Studies show that children raised in fatherless households are disadvantaged in terms of both education and employment (Khewu & Adu 2015). One of the reasons for this is that the girls from these homes often have low self-esteem and lack confidence while the boys display feelings of aggression (Grange 2013). Munaf & Hussain (2011) add that father-daughter relationships have been found to be important in respect of children's academic attainments and self-esteem. Self-esteem develops in a girl when her father encourages her to do well instead of making her feel worthless (Zia, Malik & Ali 2015). Zia et al. (2015) contend that fathers have the power either to increase the level of their daughters' self-esteem and self-confidence or to lower it. Richter (2011) further states that supportive fathers give their children self-confidence. Furthermore, paternal involvement in their children's school acts as a strong stimulus for children to achieve higher grades while it also increases the children's chances of completing school (Barnard, 2004). Such fathers provide encouragement for educational attainment (Richer, 2011). However, Jerrim & Micklewright (in Lesch et al. 2016) maintain that a father's own education level has a significant impact on the daughter's career aspirations and achievements. According to Scheffler (2014), a father's influence on his daughter's career often increases the likelihood that daughters will enter the same occupation as their fathers.

Girls who are raised in absent father households are often worse off compared to girls raised in two parent households. Zia et al. (2015) contend that children raised in fatherless homes often experience several educational challenges. According to Holborn & Eddy (2011), children raised in a household with both parents perform better academically than children raised in a single parent household. Desmond & Desmond (2006) believe that children in father present households tend to perform better in school and are more likely than their counterparts from father absent households to receive support, not just financially but also emotionally. In addition, children from father present households often enjoy protection from potential exploitation and neglect (Khewu et al. 2015).

According to Grimm-Wassil (1994), Weld & Beckwith (2014) and Zia et al. (2015) daughters who lack a father figure are prone to experience diminished cognitive development, poor school performance and lower IQ scores compared to their counterparts with a father figure. According to Krohn & Bogan (2002:601), “cognitive development affects how children perceive and interpret the information they are presented, thus making it difficult for them to excel if cognitive development is impeded”.

### **3.8.5. Financial deprivation and male dominance**

Statistics indicate that poverty is most prevalent in father absent households (Eddy et al. 2013). Case & Ardington (2006) maintain that households where the father is deceased are considerably poorer compared to those where the father is still alive. Single mother households are twice as likely to live in poverty when compared to two-parent households (Holborn & Eddy 2011). Rogan (2012) classified what he considered to be the triple burden facing single mother households, namely, the mother being a single earner in the household, the disadvantages that a woman experiences in the workplace by virtue of being female and time constraints due to the conflicting commitments of managing a household and earning a living. Children in absent father households report high levels of poverty which, in some instances, lead to abuse. In their responses, young women in the study conducted by Nduna et al. (2012) narrated that they had had to work at an early age in order to support their families while some had even attempted suicide as a way in which to escape these harsh realities. Posel & Rogan (2012a) found that, in 2006, the poverty rate was 62% for female headed households compared to 33% for male headed households.

Recent studies have found a link between financial deprivation and sexual behaviour, particularly among girls (Langa 2010; McLean, 1995; Mantasha et al. 1998; Luke & Kurz 2002). According to Stoebe et al. (2011:2) “[m]ost conventionally within the context of highly unequal gendered power and position, very poor women portrayed as victims, resort to ‘survival sex’ to acquire basic needs”. Cross-generational and transactional sexual relationships are increasingly becoming acceptable in societies throughout the world (Langa

2010). In South Africa the percentage of girls dating men at least five years older than them has increased from 18.5% in 2005 to 27.6% in 2008 (Shefer, Clowes & Verganani 2012:436). Studies in Cameroon, Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania and South Africa indicate that girls exchange sex for money in order to cover their educational expenses, for economic survival, to acquire social networks and for family survival (Chatterji, Murray, London & Anglewicz 2004; Luke et al. 2002). In poor families parents may actively support their daughters' relationships with older men who provide for their basic needs (Luke & Kurz 2002). Girls, particularly from female-headed households, may feel pressure to assist their mother and the family to survive and, thus, they enter into transactional relationships. In South Africa a popular practice, namely, sugar daddies or "blessers" and "blesse" has emerged. Blessers refer to older men who spend money on younger women in exchange for sexual relationships (Government Communication 2016).

Although financial deprivation is the key motivator for transactional sex, there are girls who report dating older men because they enjoy the pleasure of sexual activity with older and more experienced men (Luke et al., 2002). Some of these young women acknowledge that these men will not marry them while some are not even interested in marriage but rather in sexual pleasure (Silberschmidt & Rasch 2001). Gregson et al. (2002) maintain that some of these young women use the financial support and benefits they receive from these older men to improve their image in order to attract boyfriends and potential boyfriends. Finally, although a transactional relationship is not unique to women from single mother households, financial deprivation is associated with single mother households, thus rendering the children, especially the girls, from these households vulnerable to and easy prey for older men with material resources.

Poverty is the major driver behind human trafficking in Southern Africa (NPA 2010). Almost all the victims of human trafficking live in abject poverty (Songololo 2000). It is widely known that poverty and conditions associated with poverty make people increasingly vulnerable. According to the NPA (2010), poverty extends beyond just the need for money and is also

associated with a lack of parental care and protective mechanisms for the children concerned. Youth poverty in South Africa is reflected in the scarcity of employment after the youth have completed their education (Makiwane & Kwizera 2009, as quoted in NPA 2010). A major contributing factor to youth poverty is early pregnancies and the concomitant single parenting as young women fall pregnant and the need to find economic opportunities to enable them to care for their young becomes urgent. Many of these trafficked girls lack the necessary financial sources from their parents (Songololo 2000). Thus, poverty and the need for support renders these young women vulnerable and traffickers use various means to lure, capture and exploit these girls (Wondergen 2010).

The lack of formal education and limited opportunities for the youth are also major contributors to poverty, especially in the rural areas (Delpont, Mhlava, Koen, Songololo & Mackay 2007). This situation in the rural then forces young people to migrate from the rural to urban areas in search of employment and better lives (NPA 2010). In South Africa Gauteng and the Western Cape remain the two main destinations for migrants fleeing rural poverty (NPA 2000). Most of these migrants arrive in the urban areas with little or no work skills, and no family members. Survival then becomes crucial with traffickers in the large cities taking advantage of this need to survive to exploit their victims.

According to Songololo (2000), a significant number of girls are then forced to prostitute themselves in search of a living wage while some are forced to work in sweatshops, brothels and as domestics, sometimes for a minimal payment. Thus, desperation and the need for economic opportunities expose the victims of trafficking to all sorts of danger and diseases. Poverty remains a major problem in Southern African countries and also forms the foundation of many of the factors that drive human trafficking.

### **3.9. Conclusion**

Beyond children's feeling and perceptions about absent fathers is the harsh reality of the negative factors linked with fatherlessness. Paternal loss is linked with financial insecurity, inability to afford schooling and, eventually, the inability to complete schooling, a lack of fulfilment of basic needs and isolation from the paternal family. Women often resort to transactional sex as a way of escaping poverty, even although this route may lead to other problems such as HIV/AIDS and unwanted pregnancies. Older men also have reasons behind engaging in transactional sex, in particular, their desire for a sexual partnership with a younger girl who, potentially, makes them feel young again. In addition, there is also the enhancement of prestige, domestic help and maintenance of health. Furthermore, sexual activity with young girls enhances these men's self-esteem.

Many questions, such as the involvement of non-resident fathers in their children's lives, have not yet been answered by empirical research in South Africa. Even when researching single mothers, most research tends to focus on how single mothers cope and not on how the children cope. These limitations in existing research made this study particularly important as the study intended to locate the experiences of young, adult women within a life course perspective of fatherhood and to explore how historical events and times affect women from childhood through to adulthood.



## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter focuses on the research processes undertaken in exploring the fatherlessness of young women between the ages of 18 and 25 in the Tlokwe Local Municipality. Accordingly, the chapter discusses the research design, the process of obtaining entry into the research environment, sampling criteria and ethical considerations in detail. This chapter also further elucidates on the processes used in the analysis of the data collected.

### **4.2. Methodological approach**

Bailey (1979) defines methodology as the philosophy of the research process. A good research methodology should provide details on the way in which the researcher intends to carry out the study. I followed a qualitative research method in order to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of girls who grow up in fatherless homes. Creswell (2007) defines qualitative research as “a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem”. According to Becker & Bryman (2009), qualitative research is important because it focuses on the actors’ meaning, it provides a description and it emphasises context. Social life is usually viewed in terms of unfolding processes and is unstructured thus providing researchers with flexibility and, finally, with theories and concepts that emerge out of the processes.

According to Elder (2000), the life course approach represented a major change in the way in which human life is studied since it does not treat events in isolation but, rather, as essentials in a continuous sequence. I chose an exploratory research design located in the qualitative life course approach for the purposes of this study as it would allow participants to actively reflect on their experiences of growing up without a father, how historical events and time had affected them and how they, as young women, had responded when growing up without their biological fathers.

### **4.3. Research design**

According to Bless & Higson-Smith (quoted by Maree 2008; 291), “the plan of how to proceed in determining the nature of the relationship between variables is called a research design”. It is essential that the design selected is appropriate to the research questions asked (Imas & Rist 2009). The primary aim of a research design is to provide an in-depth understanding of the sampled group, distribution of the research areas and the events that occur before, during and after the research is completed (Babbie & Mouton 2001).

#### **4.3.1. Entry into the research environment**

In order to gain access to young, adult women in the Tlokwe Local Municipality I approached the Department of Basic Education in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District to obtain permission to interview school girls who fall within the research sample. In addition, I approached various other organisations such as the Apostolic Faith Mission, Emmanuel Assembly, the Potchefstroom office of the Family and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSA), Aganang FM (local, community radio station) and Banna Ba Kae (Tlokwe based NGO addressing gender based violence). However, even after obtaining permission from the various organisations, there was still a second and, at times, a third level of entry on which I had to embark. In the case of the Department of Education, although the Department had provided me with the official approval (see Appendix B), I still had to approach various schools to request permission to interview learners. The school principals were the point of entry to the schools. Once the principals of Tlokwe and Seiphemelo Secondary Schools had given me permission to enter their schools, they designated an educator who would act as the link between myself and the learners. On the hand, religious leaders made announcements at their assemblies and left the recruiting process to me. Accordingly, once the criteria and the purpose of the study had been clarified during both the youth and the main church services, I still had to purposively sample participants.

In order to test both the research validity and the relevance of the interview schedule, I administered the first focus group questionnaire to a group of six learners from the Seiphemelo

Secondary School. The responses given during this interview proved to be essential in strengthening the interview schedule and clarifying how to approach certain questions. As a result of this first interview I recognised the difficulties these young women experienced in sharing their feelings and experiences of fatherhood with a man and, thus, I recruited a female research assistant to sit in on the interviews. This assisted in addressing the uncertainties that some of the participants were experiencing. The presence of this research assistant and her contribution to the process were invaluable.

#### **4.3.2. Sampling**

Sampling refers to the process by which the researcher gains access to the participants of the study. A sample is a segment of the research population from whom the requisite data is collected (Imas & Rist 2009; Bless et al. 2006).

The research population for this study comprised black, young adult women between the ages of 18 and 25 years from the Tlokwe Municipality, North West Province and who had grown up without their biological fathers. In order to gather a rich set of data a total of 34 participants was purposively chosen. The participants were chosen purposively from various institutions in the Tlokwe Municipality such as churches and social clubs (described above). I conducted four focus group interviews in which 24 young adult women participated. After these focus group discussions 10 face-to-face interviews were conducted. Purposive sampling implies the selection of units of analysis based on both the knowledge of the researcher and the aims of the study (Babbie & Mouton 2001). Purposive sampling is a non-random method whereby the researcher selects information-rich cases to study in-depth (Patton, 2002). This selection of the group was conducted with the assistance of teachers in the case of schools, religious leaders in the case of churches and managers in other institutions. The contribution of these leaders to the selection of the participants was important as they possessed a sound knowledge of which participants would best suit the criteria.

The contribution of the leaders was limited to the selection of the participants for the focus group interviews only. Face-to-face interviews followed the focus groups and a snowballing

sampling method (also known as chain referral samples) was employed to recruit the next set of participants. According to Imas & Rist (2009), the snowball sampling is best suited when the boundaries of the population are unknown and there is no sampling frame. I requested the participants from the focus group interviews to refer me to young women they may have known who fitted the criteria. However, due to the sensitivity of the research topic and some young women's wish to "let sleeping dogs lie", many of the young women referred to me were not prepared to participate in the study.

The use of social network platforms such as Facebook was another tool used to recruit the required sample. Social network sites are popular among young people. According to the Department of Works and Pension (2014), over 80% of internet users between the ages of 14 and 34 are on at least one form of social network. Thus, the sampling of young people via such platforms is fast becoming a common process. I posted on my Facebook the background, purpose and significance of the study and invited young women who were interested and who fitted the specified criteria to either inbox me on Facebook or on WhatsApp. A total of 18 young women were interest in participating in the study and, thus, they made contact with me. Of this number, seven participated in the study, seven, although interested, could not make the time set due to unforeseen circumstances and four did not fit the sample criteria. However, those who did not fit the criteria but were interested in the study recommended either a friend or a close relative.

#### **4.3.3. Focus group interviews**

A focus group interview strategy is based on the assumption that group interaction will be productive in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details and experiences and releasing inhibitions that may discourage participants from disclosing information (Maree 2008). Becker & Bryman (2009) add that this type of discussion also enables the exploration of a set of defined issues and people's experiences. In social science the main methods of gathering qualitative data is through individual interviews with and observation of the participants. However, focus group interviews combine the two approaches as people are

interviewed in a group (Freitas, Oliveira, Jenkins & Popjoy 1998).

I conducted four focus group interviews. The first focus group interview was very important as it, among other things, gave me an opportunity to understand the issues that these young women found the most pertinent thus allowing me to refine the questionnaire in line with the findings of the pilot study. Furthermore, valuable lessons on how to conduct future interviews emerged from this first focus group interview. As already mentioned, I appointed a female research assistant as a result of the lesson learnt at the pilot interviews. The subject of fathers and fatherhood is very delicate for young women and, thus, I had to restructure the sequencing of the questions. To this effect, questions which centred around the first objective of the research study, namely, “To explore young adult women’s conceptualisation of fatherhood and what it entails”, were asked first, while sensitive questions such as questions about the participants’ experiences of being raised in a non-resident father household (research objective 2) and long term consequences of this (research objective 3) were asked in the middle of the interview. The questions were sequenced in this order to allow the research team to gain the trust of the participants, especially those who had been sceptical about participating. Accordingly, I employed the principle of self-disclosure, namely, an action involving revealing personal information about oneself. According to Collins & Miller (1994), self-disclosure is essential in the development and maintenance of close relationships. Revealing personal information about our experiences of fatherhood (my research assistant and I) helped the young women to feel comfortable enough to share their stories with us.

The four focus groups lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were conducted with groups of between six and ten young women. Although the participants had been recruited from the townships of the Tlokwe Municipality, a neutral and accessible location was chosen for the research interviews. The first and the fourth focus group interviews were conducted in the Seiphemelo Secondary School library. A total of 13 young women between the ages of 18 and 20 participated in these two interviews – six in the first interview and seven in the fourth. The second and third focus group interviews were conducted in a classroom at the Tlokwe

Secondary School and in a boardroom at the Apostolic Faith Mission, Emmanuel Assembly. Six and five young women respectively participated in these two interviews. I collected those participants who could not reach the venues due to the distance between the interview venues and their homes, and delivered them home after the sessions.

Although a set of questions had been prepared beforehand, I used a semi-structured approach and this allowed for the participants to be spontaneous in their line of discussion while I was able to probe new themes as they arose. In an attempt to ensure maximum participation I allowed participants to use the languages of their choice. The common languages used in the interviews were English and Setswana. All the interviews were audio-taped recorded with the permission of the participants. In addition to the audio recordings, detailed notes were taken by both myself and the research assistant during the interviews. These notes were important because they detailed a description of my reactions to my observations of the participants during the interviews. Patton (2002) contends that it is important for the researcher to record basic information such as where the interview took place, who was present, the physical setting and the activities that took place. These notes were immediately incorporated into the transcriptions.

#### **4.3.4. Face-to-face interviews**

According to Lavrakas (2008), face-to-face interviews are the best method of minimising non-responses and soliciting sensitive information. It was on this basis that I decided to combine the focus group interviews with face-to-face interviews. Upon completion of the focus group interviews, I invited the participants to be part of the in-depth, face-to-face interviews. In addition, I also asked them to recommend someone they knew who might be interested in the study and fit the criteria.

Ten young women participated in the face-to-face interviews. The pseudonyms and family profiles of these participants are provided in Appendix F. Of these, three participants had also participated in the focus group interviews. Some of the reasons for the sample of ten young women included the fact some prospective participants had cancelled their interviews due to

certain commitments and also that the themes that had emerged from the first five interviews were reoccurring, in other words, data saturation had been reached. Imas & Rist (2009) argue that there is no fixed rule about the number of interviews one should conduct although the general rule is to conduct interviews until no new theme arises. Imas & Rist (2009) maintain that this usually happens after three to six sessions. The face-to-face interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

In order to gather a rich set of data, the participants in the face-to-face interviews used the language of their choice. Once again, as in the focus group interviews, the participants tended to use English and Setswana as these are the most common languages in the Tlokwe Municipality. An advantage for the research team members was that we are competent in both languages and, thus, we were able to follow the participants' discussions and interactions and to probe themes as they arise. Due to the sensitivity of the topic of fatherhood, a common challenge for both the focus group and the face-to-face interviews was the constant crying on the part of some of the participants. In some instances I paused the interview to allow the participants to calm down. In addition, I constantly reminded the participants of their right to withdraw from the study if they felt they were unable proceed. Nevertheless, not one of the participants withdrew from the interviews. Other measures that I took to address the participants who were overtly emotional are discussed under ethical considerations.

I also explored the experiences of these adult women who had grown up in households without their biological fathers. It is important to note that the concept of involvement became key in the focus groups because research has shown that the presence (resident fathers) of fathers in the household does not necessarily equate with involvement while absence (non-resident fathers) does not always imply uninvolvement. During the sessions I explored the views of young women on what fatherhood entails and how the presence or absence and/or involvement of a father had shaped their lives (objective 1).

#### **4.3.5. Data analysis and interpretation**

The first ten interviews were conducted in the space of one week. During the second week of fieldwork a further three face-to-face interviews were conducted. This excluded the first focus group interview which had initially been intended as a pilot. At the conclusion of each interview the research assistant and I compared field notes, focusing on our impressions and major themes which had arisen. During the three weeks that followed we embarked on and concluded the processes of transcribing the interviews.

A transcript should be understood as text that “re-presents” what was said during the interview – a re-construction of reality. Thus, the main challenge in any transcription process is to ensure that the transcript retains the truth and intended meaning of what was said during the interview (Ross 2010; Setati 2003). Since the interviews had been audio-taped this allowed us to listen to the recordings repeatedly to ensure that all the necessary information was captured. Then in accordance with what Ross (2010) and Setati (2004) suggested we exchanged our transcripts and recordings in order to verify if we had captured the true meaning of the interviews. The information captured was then coded according to the themes that had emerged frequently during the interviews. This process involved interpreting the data by finding casual links, making inferences and attaching meanings.

According to Mayan (2001:21), data analysis is “the process of observing patterns in the data, asking questions of those patterns, constructing conjectures, deliberately collecting data from specifically selected individuals on targeted topics, confirming or refuting those conjectures, then continuing analysis, asking additional questions, seeking more data, furthering the analysis by sorting, questioning, constructing and testing conjectures, and so forth”.

According to Patton (2002), there are two types of analysis, namely, inductive and deductive analysis. Inductive analysis involves discovering patterns, themes and categories while deductive analysis involves the analysis of data using an existing framework. The focus group and face-to-face interviews transcripts were read repeatedly in order to discover recurring themes or patterns in the participants’ responses regarding their experiences of growing up in



a fatherless household. These themes were developed in accordance with the study's aims in order to ascertain the participants' feelings about fathers. Once the themes and patterns had been identified, I tested their authenticity and appropriateness. This was done with the assistance of an external person, such as my supervisor, so as to avoid bias.

#### **4.3.6. Trustworthiness**

According to Johnson & Turner (cited in Maree 2008), the term 'trustworthiness' refers to the measure to which the quality of the research convinces the audience that it is worth paying attention to the research study in question. Guba & Lincoln (1981) suggest that four strategies that may be used when testing for trustworthiness, namely, credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Credibility measures whether the data collected is believable while transferability is concerned with whether the findings of the research would be relevant in a setting different to the setting in which the original study was conducted (Becker et al. 2009). Dependability, on the other hand, refers to the degree to which the reader is certain and convinced that the reported findings occurred as the researcher said they had occurred (Maree 2008). Finally, confirmability refers to the extent to which the researcher's personal values interfered with the findings of the research.

In order to enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings, the interview transcripts were referred back to the participants and they were requested to provide their inputs and to verify whether the information captured was a true reflection of the discussions. Becker et al. (2009) emphasise that, when dealing with sensitive topics, it is important to revert back to the participants with the transcriptions to ensure that the researcher does not misrepresent the participants. The participants made a few comments, some of which were incorporated into the transcriptions. This exercise was important because it enhanced the authenticity of the responses as captured by the research team.

In order to ensure the transferability of the study findings, I kept a detailed account of the research setting as recommended by Lincoln & Guba (in Becker et al. 2009). The interviews were recorded and these records are kept safe in a repository and may be accessed by those

who might have an interest in the study.

#### **4.4. Ethical considerations**

In social research it is important that before a study is conducted, all the participants are fully informed about the study and also that the necessary procedures and protocols are followed in obtaining the sample. General agreement on the content of the informed consent form should be established between the researcher and the participants before the research commences. Research ethics place the emphasis on the humane and sensitive treatment of participants and also help to prevent the abuse of the subjects by the researchers. There are a number of ethical considerations that social science considers to be important. The following were deemed to be relevant for the purposes of this study.

##### **4.4.1. Anonymity and confidentiality**

The study proposal was submitted for review to the relevant UNISA Research Ethical Committee and ethical clearance to conduct the study was subsequently granted (see Appendix A). The Committee made reference to two principles of ethical consideration as key to this study, namely, anonymity and confidentiality which are, in fact, linked. The difference is that, in terms of anonymity, the researcher may not identify a given response with a certain participant while confidentiality, on the other hand, implies that the researcher may identify the person giving the responses but must undertake not to do so publicly (Maree 2008). In order to ensure that these two principles were upheld, at the beginning of each session, the participants were briefed on the importance of ensuring that all the information discussed in the sessions remained confidential. Beyond this, I ensured that access to the areas where the interviews were conducted was controlled so as not to allow outsiders to take part in the discussions. The audio-tapes of the interviews were not discussed with anyone not linked to the research and this would remain the case until they are destroyed. Anonymity was ensured by replacing the real names of the participants with pseudonyms. However, in focus group interviews it is not possible ever to fully guarantee confidentiality because the participants may reveal confidential information to outsiders. One way in which I tried to guard against this was

to ensure that the participants in each group were not known to each other, although this was not always possible in the case of the school learners.

#### **4.4.2. Informed consent**

Informed consent implies that the research participants should be fully aware of the procedures to be followed in the research as well as the risk and benefits involved. It is also essential that the participants are aware that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time should they so wish (Bless et al. 2006).

Informed consent is not always possible achieved with regard to learners. It is possible that, prior to some of the interviews, the learners may have been pressured to participate in the interviews without their being given enough information about the study. However, prior to the commencement of the interviews, I explicitly explained to the participants the purpose of the study and informed them that their participation in the study was voluntary and, thus, that they were free to withdraw at any point during the study and that this would not have any negative consequences for them. The informed consent form was to be signed only after participants had agreed to be part of the study although, in most cases, the participants had signed informed consent forms before I had even finished explaining the background to the study (see Appendix D). Although there were some intensely emotional sessions, not one of the participants withdrew entirely from the study. Of the 34 young women interviewed, two only left the session to cry outside the interview room. In these cases the research assistant was on hand to comfort them. I also arranged with a social worker from Family and Marriage South Africa (FAMSA) to be on standby during the interviews in case the participants needed further support.

#### **4.5. Limitations of the researcher**

The first and most salient limitation was I was a male figure who was tackling a subject as sensitive as fatherhood among young women. However, there were two extremes to my being a man probing issues of fatherhood. On the one hand, some of the young women initially felt

threatened by divulging their stories simply because I was a male and probably would not understand how it feels to be a young woman raised in a fatherless home. On the other hand, some of the women used this as an opportunity to vent their frustrations with men, particularly with their fathers. I was frequently asked during interviews whether I was a father and, if so, was I a good father. The responses I gave to these two questions were key to putting participants at ease and allowing them to share their stories with me. Furthermore, being an outsider, limiting as it was, had its advantages because it allowed me to remain impartial as an outsider looking in. However, as Rabe (2003) underlined, the status of being either an outsider or an insider is fluid and, although I began as an outsider, the more time I spent with the young women the more I became an insider. As the interviews progressed it was possible to increase in the level of engagements. This may have been as a result of the participants feeling calmer than they had before and thus free to engage, or else the barriers that divide insiders and outsiders had been broken and the participants had started to regard me as someone who could be trusted. These young women started trusting me with their stories and, hence, they were confident as to ask whether or not I was a good father.

At the conclusion of some of the interviews the young women pleaded with me to include fathers in my next research study and to complete such a study to enable fathers to learn and understand the challenges that young women face as a result of their absence.

In common with the participants I also, as a researcher, experienced a roller coaster of emotions during the emotions as a male and listening to the frustrations and pain that these young women had experienced as a result of growing up in fatherless households. At times during the debriefing sessions and transcribing the research team, myself included, could not help shedding tears listening to the participants' recollections. I ended every interview with the following words: "I know some of you have probably heard a man tell you this without expecting something in return, but I love you and you are all beautiful". I did this based on the realisation that many of these young women were longing to hear a man tell them how much he loved them but without expecting any favours in return.

As already mentioned, I recruited a female research assistant to help with the study and her presence was key in ensuring that these young women felt at ease. In addition, she also assisted in instances where emotional support was required.

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

The research methodology as outlined in the research proposal was carried out with no major alterations. This chapter discussed the methodology employed in this study and the challenges experienced by the researcher. The chapter also contained an in-depth exploration of the research design used and discussed the data analysis and interpretation, as well as the steps taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. Finally, the chapter elucidated the ethical considerations taken into account during the study as well as the challenges I had experienced as a man probing the sensitive subject of fathers and fatherhood. The next chapter focuses on the findings of the study.

## **Chapter 5: Findings and discussion**

### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents and interprets the results of the face-to-face and focus groups interviews which were conducted. A total number of 34 young women from the Tlokwe Local Municipality shared their experiences of being raised with non-resident fathers. The results of the study are thematically organised in accordance with the research questions as outlined in the introductory chapter.

This chapter discusses the four themes of the study as per the responses given by the participants during the qualitative data collection process.

### **5.2. Description of the research setting**

The study was undertaken in Greater Tlokwe in the North West Province. Greater Tlokwe covers an area of approximately 2 700 square kilometres and includes Potchefstroom, Ikageng, Mohadin, Promosa, rural villages and commercial farming areas such as Klipdrift, Boskop, Schoemansdrift, Venterskroon and Lindequesdrift. These settlements are small and consist of informal housing and poor infrastructure. Tlokwe is home to the town of Potchefstroom which was founded in 1838. The town was the first capital of the Transvaal province (one of the four provinces in pre 1994 South Africa) until it was replaced by Pretoria in 1855. Between 1880 and 1881 British soldiers occupied the Potchefstroom city during the first Anlgo-Boer War as well as the second war from 1899 to 1902 as part of the South African War.

In accordance with the Municipal Demarcation Board Tlokwe is located in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality. Although gold mines predominant in the district Tlokwe and Ventersdorp are the only exceptions to this rule. Tlokwe is the economic hub of manufacturing in the province and home to the University of North West, Potchefstroom Campus.

Setswana, Afrikaans and English are the main languages spoken in the region. According to the 2011 census the population in the region comprised 162 762, with the majority of the

population being black Africans (116 011), followed by coloureds (11 002) (StatsSA 2011; 12). Approximately 10 000 females fell within the targeted sample of this study. It is estimated that a total of 61 367 people in the region have no monthly income while 22 115 have an average income per person per month of between R 1 and R4 800. It is acknowledged that the Tlokwe Local Municipality is beset by social problems such as substance abuse, high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, teenage pregnancy, female headed households, commercial sex work, child abuse and domestic violence (Tlokwe City Council 2013a; Tlokwe City Council 2013b).

### **5.3. Family relationships**

A total of 34 young adult women between the ages 18 and 25 were sampled in the Tlokwe Local Municipality. Ten women who had grown up in non-resident father households participated in the face-to-face interviews while 24 participated in focus groups interviews. This section of the study aims to provide information on the family relationships and dynamics of the women who participated in the face-to-face interviews. A table containing the demographic characteristics of the participants is presented in Appendix F.

**Lerato:** Lerato is 25 years of age and was raised by her grandparents in Brits. Her mother lived in Orkney with her biological father. Lerato met her father only once when she was seven years old and, during this meeting, she witnessed her father physically abusing her mother. Lerato avoided going back to Orkney for most of her life and only went back to live with her mother at the age of 18 after her father's death. At the time of the study she was living in Potchefstroom with her mother, aunt and nephew.

**Nthabiseng:** Nthabiseng is a 20-year-old woman born and raised in Potchefstroom. She was raised by her grandmother. Her mother was a migrant worker in Johannesburg. In 2009 her mother returned to Potchefstroom and she now lives with Nthabiseng and Nthabiseng's grandmother. Nthabiseng first met her father when she was in Grade 5, through her cousin who was asked by Nthabiseng's father to facilitate their meeting. Nthabiseng also saw her father several times before he died. She narrated how she had drifted away from her father through her primary school years and only reconnected with him in 2005. Unfortunately he

died in 2007.

**Tshegofatso:** Tshegofatso is 23 years of age and was raised by her aunt after her mother abandoned her and her sister, Tshegofatso was about three years old when her mother left. In her narrative she touched on the day her mother left her and her sister in the care of their sick, alcoholic father. Her paternal aunt then took her mother to court to request that full custody of Tshegofatso and her sister be granted to her – a motion that her mother did not oppose. Her father died when she was five years old and she has since lived with her aunt. Although her aunt had a husband Tshegofatso did not describe their relationship as that of a father and daughter and narrated that she had only spoken to her uncle in the presence of her aunt.

**Thuto:** Thuto is a 23-year-old women raised by a single mother. Thuto's father was actively involved in her life from her birth until she was six years old. In her narrative of her relationship with her father Thuto related how her father had always taken her and her mother out to various recreational and leisure areas. However, one day he bought her school shoes and promised her he would come back, but never did. Thuto did not hear from her father until her matriculation year when he telephoned her and promised her that he would come to see her. However, he never came.

**Modiegi:** Modiegi is 23 years old and was raised by a single mother. Until 2004 the household comprised Modiegi, her mother and her older brother. Her older brother later moved out to search for employment in order to provide financial assistance to the household. She met her father for the first time in 2005 at the age of 12 years. It was at this meeting that she found out that she had other siblings from her father's side. Although her relationship with her father was fraught with numerous challenges she described her relationship with her siblings as pleasant. Despite the fact her father had taken the first step to initiate their reconciliation Modiegi explained that he had later, intentionally or unintentionally, lost contact with her. This she attributed to the presence and influence of her father's wife. Modiegi has had health problems and indicated that these had been caused by the fact that her father has not formally



introduced her to his ancestors.

**Relebogile:** Relebogile is an 18-year-old matriculant. Her mother died when she was still very young (she does not recall her actual age when her mother at the time). By that time her father had already remarried. At the time of the study Relebogile was living with her 23-year-old unemployed sister and her three children. She bluntly stated that her relationship with her father was based on monetary benefits and nothing else. Relebogile had experienced challenges in the past with her stepmother and it appeared that, every time, she attempted to build a relationship with her father quarrels between her and the stepmother prevented this. She described in her narrative how her father always took her stepmother's side in any conflicts and, as a result, she had decided to stop trying to form a relationship with him. Relebogile indicated that there was no discipline in the house she shared with her sister, and that each one came and went as they pleased.

**Mpho:** Mpho is 23 years of age and she lives with her aunt, three cousins (two male, one female) and, until recently, her grandmother who had died in 2015. Mpho's mother had died when she was very young. She clearly did not feel comfortable talking about this. At the time of the study she had a relationship with her father although it appeared to be fraught with several problems. Although her father paid maintenance regularly, Mpho blamed her father for her failure to go to university. According to her, if her father had been proactive when she was doing matric, she would have probably been able to further her studies.

**Lebo:** Lebo is a 19-year-old woman who was raised in a female only household, comprising her mother and older cousin and, later, her younger sister. Of the ten participants Lebo was the only one who had never met her biological father. Her earliest memory of being fathered was by her social father who was her mother's lover. She explained that the relationship between her and this social father was so good that she had only later found out that that he was not her biological father. However, her social father had died when she was six and her mother had never brought anyone home after that. At the time of the study Lebo was a nursing student at the University of North West. In her view one of the reasons she had managed to

make a success of her life was because she had been raised by a strict mother. She further believed that there had had more positives than negatives to her father's absence. She explained that the one thing that had driven her to make a success of herself was to prove to her father in absentia that she could succeed without him.

**Dieketseng:** Dieketseng is 19 years old. She was raised in a household of six – her two older brothers, her younger sister, her mother and her grandmother, her stepfather, though present in her life, he did not live in the same household as her. Dieketseng had grown up believing her stepfather was her biological father and it was only at the age of 17 that she had been told who her biological father was. Her mother had hidden the truth about her father because, according to Dieketseng, her biological father was not as rich as her stepfather and her mother felt her biological father would not be able to provide material resources that her stepfather could provide.

**Naledi:** Naledi is 23 years old and resides with her mother, her younger brother and her seven year old son. She had fallen pregnant at the age of 16. Her son's father was not involved in his child's life. At the time of the study her father was a truck driver who lived and worked in Kimberley. Naledi's father came home once a year only during the festive season but paid maintenance on a monthly basis.

The focus group interviews were conducted at four venues – two at the Seiphemelo Secondary School, one at the Tlokwe Secondary School and one at the Apostolic Faith Mission Emmanuel Assembly. All the participants were females between the ages of 18 and 25 and born and/or residing in the Tlokwe Local Municipality. In fact, all of them had been born and, at the time of the study, they were residing in various areas in the Ikageng Township – nine (the majority) resided in Kanana, followed by six in Extension 1 in Greenfields and four each in Sarafina and Thabeng. The pseudonyms of these participants are provided in Appendix F (*Focus group interview participants*).

#### 5.4. Background

During the face-to-face interviews I asked the participants four introductory questions: 1. Tell me about your family composition; 2. How long have you lived with your family? 3. How long have you lived in Ikageng? and 4. Have you ever met your father? The main reason I asked these fairly neutral questions was to help the participants to relax. Imas & Rist (2009) advise that, when conducting face-to-face interviews, it is essential that researchers begin with less threatening questions. However, the discussions that arose from the four questions become useful not just as a means to break the ice but also in providing me with the context and background of the participants. It emerged that most of the participants in the face-to-face interviews had either been too young the first time they had met their fathers to remember them or they had never met them at all.

**Thuto:** *"I have met him, neh, but I was young. I cannot pinpoint him now, even if he passed [me in the street] I would not be able to say that's my father. I was about six when I met him and he bought me school shoes and he said he was going to come back and that was the last time I saw him. He never came back. He stays in Carletonville."*

**Interviewer:** Do you remember how you felt the first time you saw your father?

**Thuto:** *"He was my dad, he came around often ... he took me to ... you know, where Fantasia used to be ... ja, the old river mall. We used to go there and do stuff and eat and then drive me and my mom back home. That sort of stuff, it was just like any other ... then, one day, he bought me shoes and it was okay, cool, he never came back ... ever."*

Diketseng's story was similar to Thuto's experience of being fathered. The only difference between the two stories was that, while Thuto had known her father from birth until the age of six, Dieketseng had only met her father at the age of 17, however, both women remembered their fathers doing something pleasant for them before they left. Dieketseng narrated her

experience as follows:

**Interviewer:** Have you ever met your father?

**Dieketseng:** *"My real one [father]? Yes once, I met him last year [2015], I was 17 at the time. When I first saw him I didn't know he was my father, he came home, and he bought some winter clothes."*

**Interviewers:** Have you spoken since?

**Dieketseng:** *"No, he lives in Itsoseng. The last time he came was last year, although people say he usually comes. When he comes he does not sleep in his parents' house close to where I live, he sleeps in Extension 11. He will only come this side once a year, just like he did in 2005."*

Thandi contended:

**Thandi (FG3):** *"We used to live with my dad and, sometimes, we would visit him with my mother when he was away at work, until he decided to leave and never return. I wondered why he had left. I was about 10 years old at the time. I was hurt."*

These statements confirm the trend, also found in the literature, of fathers being present and active in their children's lives at one point and then disappearing (Molongoana 2015; Cheadle, Amato & King, 2010), leaving the children with questions and, at times, feeling that they were to blame for their fathers' absence. Thuto's and Dieketseng's fathers had shown an interest in their children's lives by buying clothes and other necessities. The abandonment by their fathers leave daughters experiencing considerable hurt and with more questions than answers.

Another interesting aspect that emerged from the background questions was the fact that it was the fathers of some of participants who had made an effort to contact their daughters. Ntabiseng and Modiegi shared how they had been given message by a member of the family that their fathers wanted to make contact with them

**Nthabiseng:** *“I have met my father, I remember the first time I met him, I was in grade 5, and a cousin of mine came to me and said my father wanted to see me. So, I went to see him – that was in 2005. However, we drifted apart when I started primary school and, in 2007, he passed away.”*

**Modiegi:** *“In 2005 he approached my mother, telling her that he wanted to meet me. Actually my mother kept on telling me that your father is around, you see, but that thing I didn’t consider it, you see, because I grew up with my mother being present, I didn’t really take it to heart that I want my father and all that. Then he told my mother that he would like to meet me, he came to meet me in 2005, then things just became normal, I found out I had a little brother and sister, those are his children in the side, I met them. We continued meeting for 2005/6/7 but starting from 2008 he changed again.”*

In the case of the participants above, despite the fact that the fathers had taken the initial step to become part of their daughters’ lives, the relationships had eventually ended. Sporadic contact with biological fathers has been found to be unpredictable and leaves the children with mixed emotions. Abandonment by a father is a significant turning point in a girl-child’s life, especially if the child has fond memories of the father prior to his disappearance. These participants express how they had felt disappointed and let down when their fathers had suddenly left. Thuto, for example, remembered her father as a warm and loving man, who had taken her and her mother out as often as he could. However, he left one day and he never returned. Thuto’s narrative is in line with the life course principle of a turning point with the turning point representing a discontinuity in direction. According to Wheaton & Gotlib (1997), turning points are significant to individuals as they signal adjustments in terms of which individuals have to learn to function in new ways and move on.

### **5.5. When is a father a parent?**

Fatherhood is inherent to parenthood. In fact, in most societies the use of the word father or mother is used when a distinction is being drawn between the two parents on the basis of gender. However, it emerged from this research study that certain participants used the words

*motsadi* (a Setswana word meaning parent) to refer to their mothers and the word *Ntate* or *papa*, which means father when referring to their fathers. This observation is significant because the participants used these two words to differentiate between a mother and a father. *Motsadi* bears a deeper connection to the child and, thus, in Setswana both parents are referred to as *Batsadi*, which is the plural of *Motsadi*. However, *Ntate* does not necessarily mean a biological father, but is rather a noun used to describe any aged male in society. *Ntate* is a term of respect for anyone who is an older man. In the case of this study whenever the young women spoke about *Motsadi* they were referring to a mother alone while a father was either usually described as *Ntate* or, on rare occasions, as *Papa*.

**Tshepiso (FG1):** *“Ha go tliwa mo go registareng ngwana, go tla motsadi fela. papa ene o dutse ha nagane gore ke maikarabelo a gage go registara ngwana” (When a child comes to register, only one parent comes, while the father on the other side will be sitting at home because he does not believe that being involved in the registration of the child is his responsibility).*

This observation was important for the purposes of both this research and future research because it signified that, if the participants were conscious of their choice of vocabulary to describe mothers and fathers, this could mean they did not consider absent fathers to be real parents in the same sense as they considered mothers to be real parents.

## **5.6. Women’s conceptualisation of fatherhood**

There is no agreed upon definition of fatherhood and, in recent years, various researchers have conceptualised fatherhood differently. As discussed above, Morrell et al. (2006) describe fatherhood as a social role that men undertake to care for their children, while Hunter (2006) argues that fatherhood is closely linked with men’s ability to become homebuilders. Thus, the conceptualisation of fatherhood varies from person to person. During the interviews I probed the young women’s conceptualisation of fatherhood. The responses were varied although the concepts found in literature about fatherhood such as fathers as providers (financially and emotionally), fathers as protectors and fathers as moral guides were also evident.

### 5.6.1. Fathers as financial providers and emotional supporters

Chauke et al. (2014) report that earlier African conceptualisations of fatherhood had focused on involved the father's responsibilities including, among others, the protection of the family, moral authority and financial provision. There was a belief among the young women that a father's presence in the household is an important predictor of the financial stability of the household. This belief is also supported by literature with Case & Ardington (2006) arguing that father absence is one of the major predictors of a household's socioeconomic status. There was also a presumption that fathers tend to provide for their children's financial needs when they are in close proximity as opposed to when they are away. Nthabiseng's assertion that her father would have been able to provide for her needs better if he had been present in the house supports the statements above.

**Nthabiseng** .... *"There is a role that a father should play financially because there is a difference when there is a father in the house and when there is not a father. I believe if my father and mother did not separate, I wouldn't need the things that I need right now, like material things."*

The conceptualisation of fathers as providers is deeply entrenched in the understanding of fatherhood. In a study by Eddy et al. (2013) fathers expressed their frustrations mainly towards their ex-lovers who reduced them to providing money and that a failure to live up to this expectation often resulted in their being denied access to their children. Relebogile, for example, related how her relationship with her father was based on only his paying maintenance.

**Relebogile:** *"Yeah I have [a father]. My father's has always been in there, but we do not live together, my business with my father is about money."*

**Interviewer:** How often do you see him?

**Relebogile:** *"I can spend about nine months without seeing him, but he pays his maintenance..... We bump into each other and we talk about when he is going to give me money, things like that, we never plan to meet each other."*

Thandi added that a father should "provide financially, because money is important to survive". Thus, Thandi's assertion was that a father should be able to provide financially because money is needed and it is important for the survival of daughters.

It would not be possible to discuss fatherhood and financial support without discussing the views of mothers on the payment of maintenance, damages and *lobola*. As alluded to in Chapter 2 children often feel that mothers care more about a father's ability to meet the provider expectation and less about a father playing a caring role. On the other hand, it appeared that the responses above were indicating that these young women cared more about developing healthy relationships with their fathers than with the size of their wallets. I, therefore, probed whether their mothers shared the same sentiments. The participants had the following to say:

**Dikeledi (FG1):** *"For most women, all they want from a father is money, that is what we call support, for them, as long as they get money, they say you are supporting the child. For them money is important although, if a father is in the house and does not work, they say he does not support the child, just because he does not have a means of income."*

**Gadifele (FG1):** *What pisses me off about our mothers is that, when they no longer stay with our fathers, they don't like it when we meet with them [our fathers], especially if they do not have money. I don't know how they think but they don't want us to meet with them."*

**Modiegi:** *"... the love of a father is a most important thing [more] than money, because money comes and goes, you see?"*



The payment of damages as a form of acceptance and affirmation of a child is an important practice in black South African cultures. A man pays damages as a form of atonement for impregnating a woman out of wedlock and also provides a platform for the parents from both sides to negotiate on issues pertaining to the child. Men pay damages in order to ensure they have access to their offspring (Nduna 2014b). The young women spoke about the significance of paying damages to them and to their families, with the participants expressing mixed feelings about the issue. **Leah (FG2)** simply stated: *"It's tradition"*.

**Mpho** further states: *"I cannot say much about that because we grew up with traditions, who am I to change them?"*

The participants mentioned the link between paying damages and introducing a child to the father's ancestors.

**Tshegofatso**: *".... Where he has made a child he must pay damages for the child because there are traditional things [Imbeleko] that require damages to be paid before a child can be introduced to the ancestors ..."*

Two participants cited their fathers' failure to introduce them to the ancestors and how this had resulted in their being sick.

**Modiegi**: *"... Ke boditse Mamaka gore ha papa a katla, a bare o batla go nkitsise ko badimong ba ko gabone o ka gana... A bare he.e cause bona nou wa kula cause of setso sa bone se a pallwang ke go se dira (... I asked my mother, if my father comes and says he wants to introduce me to his ancestors, would she refuse and she said no, because, right now, you are sick because of these traditions that he must perform but he is failing to)."*

**Dieketseng**: *"Last year during first term at school there were times when I was in the class when I would just collapse in the classroom and, when I got to the hospital, doctors found that there was nothing physically and emotionally wrong with me. I fell several times at school and they did not see anything. Then my mother took me to this*

*church called St John and they said there is a secret in the family that is only known to my mother, grandmother and another woman from the street but they did not mention which woman. When I asked my mother she still said she doesn't know anything, she doesn't know what this pastor is talking about. So this secret that my mother kept is the one that made me sick."*

**Interviewer:** Did you ever find out the secret and why it had made you sick?

**Dieketseng:** *"As it turns out the man I grew up calling father wasn't really my father and I needed to be introduced to my real father's ancestor and that is why I was getting sick."*

Some of the participants placed great emphasis on the practice of *inhlawulo* as an important factor in ensuring that fathers perform *imbeleko* – a traditional ceremony of introducing a child to his/her paternal ancestors. It was also apparent in the extracts from the interviews that the mothers of both these participants had acknowledged that their children's unexplained illnesses were caused by both the need for ancestral approval and the fact that the mothers had kept the paternity of the fathers secret. The participants also furnished reasons why some mothers would choose not to disclose the paternity of the child to the fathers and, sometimes, to the family.

There is also a question raised in the literature as to whether the father's inability to live up to the traditional expectations of *inhlawulo* and *lobola* is the reason why fathers in low-income societies do not feature in their children's lives. Different views were expressed on whether or not the inability of fathers to pay damages was the reason why they chose to be absent from their children's lives. Nthabiseng, Lindiwe and Keletso strongly believed that fathers are absent when they are unable to pay damages.

**Nthabiseng:** *"I believe that this thing of paying damages is the reason that fathers end up not having a relationship with their daughters. I think mothers would share the same view. The only people who would not share the same view are our grandparents."*

**Lindiwe (FG4):** *“This is why our fathers run away...”*

**Keletso (FG2):** *“I think it’s wrong because it is one of the reasons why sometimes children end up fatherless, because the father feels that he is being forced and he leaves because of the inability to pay damages.”*

Dikeledi stated plainly.

**Dikeledi (FG1):** *“In most cases money does not make men leave but, in some cases, it does. Like now at my friend’s house, her boyfriend’s family has not come to pay damages so they won’t allow him to see the child until he pays.”*

Certain of the participants assert that there are fathers who are really interested in becoming a part of their children’s life but are denied access by the mother and their family because they are unable to pay the required amount for damages.

**Naledi:** *“Paying damages is the other reason why most fathers don’t have access to their children because, sometimes, your father might be interested to be part of your life, but because he is unable to pay damages is not allowed to see you.”*

**Dieketseng:** *“Even though he wants to build a relationship with his child he can’t because he is not financially stable and he can’t pay the damages and so forth so the family will deny him access to the child.”*

This is unfortunately the reality for fathers in South Africa. On the other hand, Thengiwe and Maki believed that fathers sometimes hide behind their inability to pay damages.

**Thengiwe (FG3):** *“I don’t think damages should be an issue. I believe if a father wants to be in a child’s life, he makes all the means to be ...”*

**Maki (FG4):** *“Whether damages are paid or not, as soon as the father gets the letter that has impregnated a girl, he runs.”*

The findings by Chauke et al. (2014) show that maintenance courts often focus on the payment

of child maintenance and not on the emotional role that fathers play in their children's lives. These views were echoed by the participants who were, themselves, the children of such fathers. Often during interviews, when speaking about the issue of emotional versus financial support, the participants acknowledged that finance was an important issue and is entrenched in tradition (paying damages, *lobola*) although other women emphasised the importance of emotional support rather than financial support.

**Dikeledi (FG1):** *"I believe when a father is in the house it's better because supporting a child is not only financial but also seeing the things that she faces and assisting her, so go nna le Ntate motlung go a thusa (so living with a father in the same household is helpful)."*

Tshepiso also emphasised emotional support rather than financial support:

**Tshepiso (FG1):** *"Touching back on earlier, finances are not important as long as he is there for you and he loves and supports you, sees everything you do and takes care of you."*

There appeared to be a deep longing for a father's involvement beyond just financial provision. Naledi captured this longing as follows.

**Naledi:** *"Sometimes just being there financially is not enough. You have to talk with your dad and have a serious conversation with him and get advice. Sometimes he can provide financially, but not be there [physically and emotionally]. Sometimes you can misuse the money but, if he only provides financially, he can also not be there. Finances to me are not necessarily important because you can get it from anyone else, but you need conversations with your dad. Sometimes he can be present in your life and not have a job, but being there is the most important thing. I don't care if my dad does not work, I just need him to be present. At least I can see that he struggles to get me the things I need. It is more important for him to support me as his child than give me his money."*

It is clear from the section above that some of the young females in this study believed that a father's emotional support is more important than the extent of his financial resources. Many of these young women longed deeply for an involved father. The majority of the participants blamed father absence on the emphasis that mothers (or maternal grandparents) place on fathers as financial providers and neglect the other forms of involvement. During the interviews I could sense the genuine frustration that these young women were expressing. This frustration was directed towards their mothers for caring more about money than they did their children's emotional wellbeing and their daughters' need to form close bonds with their fathers. This frustration extends to maternal grandparents who insisted on fathers paying *inhlawulo* and denied them access in instances where the fathers were unable to pay. Finally, the frustration also stems from fathers who run away and fail to fight for their rights to have access to their children.

Two of the participants expressed how their various illnesses were linked to their fathers' inability to acknowledge them and introduce them to their ancestors.

The next sector addresses fathers as protectors and, thus, the question: If failure to introduce children to their ancestors places the children at risk of being ill, what chance does a father who is unable to pay *inhlawulo* stand of becoming a protector? According to the responses of the participants above a father who fails as a provider, who fails to pay damages and also fails to conduct *imbeleko* will also fail to protect his children against illnesses linked with his failure to perform the ceremony.

### **5.6.2. Fathers as protectors**

Historically, a father was seen as a leader and as a protector of his children and their mother against the potential predatory behaviour of other men (Makusha et al. 2012). It would appear that this has not changed significantly in the present day with the participants expressing a need to feel protected by their fathers. Areas in respect of which the participants needed protection varied from protection against being taken advantage of by boys and men and also

protection from potential physical harm. As stated in **section 3.7.4** children raised in father present households enjoy protection from both exploitation and neglect.

One participant expressed how the need for a father's protection goes beyond just a threat of bodily harm.

**Naledi:** *"Your dad can give you protection and not only when you are in trouble, but even protect you from ideas that boys put in your mind ... He will be able to tell you that it is not like this but it's like that."*

In her response to the question one participant who had been raised in a female only house stated:

**Lebo:** *"Well, for me personally, if I had a baby girl, I would want her to feel protected, to feel like "no guy is gonna play me because my dad is the first one to love me". I feel like the father is there from birth to show love and support, to teach a girl how to take care of herself, and to help her know what it is to be loved by a male person. Then guys will not easily take advantage of her. I think, I don't know."*

**Interviewer:** As a girl who grew up in a fatherless household, did you ever feel unprotected?

**Lebo:** *"Uhm... there was, actually, I think I was in Grade 5 but it was ... when it was me, my mother and my little sister, then they tried to rob us, so the people who tried to rob us knew that it was only females in the house, so then that's when I felt unprotected but then other than that one incident, I felt quite secure."*

The young women postulated that a father brings a completely different kind of protection into his daughter's life.

**Thuto:** *".... Even though a mother protects you, but there is a different kind of protection a father offers, other than that of the mother. You talk to your father about stuff you can't talk about with your mother."*

**Interviewer:** “When you say things you cannot talk about to your mother, what are those things?”

**Thuto:** “*Boy [relationship] issues, it is very awkward talking to your mother about that. I think I would ask my dad, what he thinks when a guy acts like this or like that.*”

The term ‘protection’ is, in itself, both complex and diverse. The participants cited a number of areas in relation to which they required protection with the most prevalent being protection from boys. The participants in this study expressed the uncertainty they experienced when dealing with boys and many cited the need to have a father to protect them from being tricked by boys. There was a general feeling that fathers are in a better position than mothers to advise girls about boys and relationships. This is, in fact, an area that requires further research. Beyond this, the young women expressed the need to be protected from exploitation by older men by their fathers. Some of the participants felt that older men take advantage of young girls, especially when they are aware that they live in households without a father and cited the presence of a father as protection against exploitation.

The third form of protection is protection from bodily harm. Most of the participants agreed that a father’s presence in a household is associated with protection from physical abuse. Certain of the participants of the study believed that even house robbers target households without a father figure, especially if the occupants are females. However, there were two instances in which the participants expressed the need to be protected against their step-parents: In **section 5.9** Maki narrated the horrible treatment her father had meted out to her and that, on occasion, her stepfather had thrown her out of the house at night and she had had to sleep in a neighbour’s yard.

### **5.6.3. Fathers as moral guides**

There is a notion in the literature of fathers as the moral guides of the households. However, Lesejane (2006) argued that the changing conceptualisation of fatherhood has since stripped men of this function. However, contrary to this, in the interviews conducted in this study the

young women expressed the need for and the importance of fathers to shape their morality. Another important theme that emerged was that it appeared that the children of strict mothers had better morals than their counterparts with less strict mothers.

**Nthabiseng:** *“A father should teach you about the values and moral of life – someone who will teach you about how to behave in particular environment as a woman.”*

**Bontle (FG1):** *“Out of respect for a father, the discipline in my house would have improved. There are some things that would have been better if they were spoken by a father.”*

Most of the participants endorsed the conceptualisation of fathers as moral guides. The responses, both in the focus group and face-to-face interviews, highlighted the importance of fathers as moral guides in the households. Most of the participants, although aware of the efforts that their mothers were making to maintain order in the house, felt that the households would have been better managed if there had been a strong father presence. Participants such as Bontle described their mothers as overly emotional and not always rational when disciplining their children. Dikeledi also described the job of dealing with a delinquent child as the duty of a father.

**Dikeledi (FG1):** *“Most times you find that delinquent children are those who are raised in a female-headed household because a mother cannot really guide you when it comes to teenage delinquency – that work is reserved for fathers.”*

Further to this, Relebogile had started living with her 23-year-old sister after her mother's death and, in her narrative on the level of discipline and control in the house, she explained that there are no controls in the house and she and her sister did as they pleased. She openly expressed the fact that there was no discipline in the house.

**Relebogile:** *“There is no discipline. My sister and I always fight; we fight a lot. There is no one to tell you what to do. There are no rules in the house. We do what we want to do. The only thing that helps me not to be wild and all that is because I am focused*



*on my studies. So, this is the one thing that prevents me from doing a lot of things. Also the things that my sister went through like having a child and leaving school, they have encouraged me to avoid a lot of things and do my school work. So that is how I keep myself under control, but if I want to go ... I go and there is no one who tells me what to do."*

Conversely, Thuto had used her mother's pain and frustration as her motivation to stay disciplined because she wanted to make her mother proud.

**Thuto:** *I have never gone south [become unruly] or anywhere, for that matter, with my mom, never ... discipline and being disciplined. Well, discipline should come from a parent, either one of them. But choosing to be disciplined comes from you as an individual. My thing is that I could have gone south a few times if had I wanted to in those teenage years, rebellious stage. I didn't because, when I looked at my mom, I always went like "I do not want to disappoint that woman in any shape or form", I am going to finish school; I am going to make something of myself. I am going to get her all the things she wanted or that she wants, but cannot acquire for herself. That was my mentality...that kept me going. I do not want to fall pregnant while I am still at school or leave school or stuff like that. I do not and I never did.*

There appeared to be a reasonable degree of discipline in the households where the participants described the mother as strict. Lebo and Tshegofatso explained how their mothers were generally strict when they were growing up. However, Tshegofatso admitted that, although her mother had been strict, she had needed a male in the house to assist her in maintaining and upholding the discipline in the house. She explained how both her sisters had left the house to cohabit with their partners, despite her mother's disapproval.

**Lebo:** *"Shuu, discipline here is intense, my mother, while we were young before I got to the age of 16, my mother was like "her house, her rules" and that, basically, what you had to follow."*

**Tshegofatso:** *“Yho! Nna my mother is a very strict person. I would not say there was no order in the household, even you would not notice that there wasn’t a father in that house but then, these two decided that they will go beyond her, what she desired from them is not what they did. It became hard for her to deal with them without a father.”*

Paramount to the role of fathers as moral guiders and strict mothers was the young women’s belief in their ability to shape their life trajectories. In the excerpts above the young people acknowledge the role that their parents had played in shaping their lives but contended that they could never have achieved in life had they not taken a decision to set and follow their dreams. Carpenter (2010) refers to action as life course agency.

### **5.7. Understanding of non-resident fathers**

It is important to understand the role that non-resident fathers play/played in the lives of young adult women, if any. The participants were questioned on their understanding of father involvement and their views on whether resident fathers were likely to be more involved than non-resident fathers in light of their experiences. This was based on the notion of Richter & Morrell (2006:18) that “father might well be physically present but emotionally absent, or physically absent but emotionally supportive”. In this same vein, five important, more nuanced themes emerged: Firstly, the conceptualisation of fatherhood goes beyond being merely being present and also requires a father to be emotionally supportive to his children. Thus, the first theme that emerged from the interviews was that fathers may be physically present but emotionally absent. The participants emphasised that fathers, especially the older generation, are emotionally unavailable and, hence, the first theme of *“physically present but emotionally absent”*. In the same light, paternal involvement cannot and should not be reduced to mere physical presence as the concept new fatherhood calls on fathers to become more involved in the lives of their children than was previously the case. This involvement includes, but is not limited to, fathers being involved in house chores, in rearing children and being present at prenatal and antenatal classes. The second theme was, therefore, *“physically present but uninvolved”*.

The third theme was that of a father who is *“physically absent but involved”*. Madhavan, Townsend & Garey (2008) refer to these men as “absent breadwinners”. However, this theme is problematic because, as Lesch & Kelapile (2015) contend, society still favours fathers who reside with their children while, more often than not, non-resident fathers are perceived to be uninterested in their children. A few of the participants in this study expressed a desire for their fathers to be involved in their lives, regardless of their location. There was also a feeling among some of the participants that fathers who are physically present are in a better position to become involved in the lives of their children. Thus, the fourth theme of *“physically present and involved”* emerged. This, for the participants, was the ideal situation with a father not only being present in the household but also his presence would be felt beyond just financial provision and reprimanding the children but, instead, through his involvement in the children’s school work, extra mural activities and general household chores. The final sub-theme was that of fathers who are neither physically nor emotionally present in their children’s lives. Coupled with being physically and emotional absent is the inability of these fathers to provide financially for their children’s needs. The fifth conceptualisation is, thus, *absent and uninvolved*.

The study revealed a deep seated need for close proximity and an involved type of fathering among the young women. The sections below elaborate more on these themes and also cite some of the interview responses of the participants.

#### **5.7.1. Physically present but emotionally absent**

A number of the participants described their experiences and observations of fathers who are physically present in households but who tend to be emotionally detached regarding responding to the needs of their girl-children. According to Peyper et al. (2015), a father’s absence is not limited only to a physical absence but also to his emotional absence. It is, therefore, possible for a father to be emotionally absent while maintaining a close proximity to the child. Fathers and their daughters generally find it difficult to communicate as openly about personal matters as mothers do with their daughters (Lesch & Scheffler 2016). The

participants of this research study expressed a need for fathers to be emotionally involved. For example, both Dikeledi and Bontle explained their need to have their fathers present whenever they feel discouraged in life and/or unappreciated. They contended that a father should be able to encourage his daughter.

**Dikeledi (FG1):** *“Sometimes, when a father is home he might feel ‘I am here and I see what [is] going on and there is nothing to do, I can see my child goes to school’ but not invest emotionally in the child or not invest in things that the child might need at that time when he is around.”*

In essence, this participant was saying that resident fathers tend to over-estimate the importance of their physical presence in the household and take it for granted that their children are satisfied just with being able to see them every day. Resident fathers also tend to relax when it comes to participating in activities and generally spending time with their children. This feeling is expressed in the response below:

**Bontle (FG1):** *“... but when he is a resident father he becomes relaxed and when the time arrives [to spend time with the child] he will postpone.”*

One of the participants suggested that a father’s age played a role in justifying their emotional detachment from their children.

**Boitshoko (FG2):** *“[Men] my father’s age [52] compared to fathers your age [referring to interviewer] were never taught to be emotionally present for their kids. They don’t know where to start, they might wonder. If they show emotions they might think they are expressing weakness and their kids might belittle them.”*

The extract above supports Elliot’s (2010) argument that men who experienced involved fathers when they were growing up tend to become involved fathers themselves while men who had less involved fathers have a negative attitude towards fatherhood. On the other hand, Boitshoko acknowledged the important role of education and socialisation in teaching younger fathers that it is acceptable to be emotionally present in their children’s lives. Swartz & Bhana

(2009) also argue that younger, fatherless fathers may use the discomfort they experienced when growing up with a father as a motivation to become present in their children's lives.

**Boitshoko (FG2):** *"... younger dads were taught, they had subjects like Life Orientation and studies like this one [referring to the study in which she was participating]. They have television and movies to watch to be taught these things."*

It is becoming clear that young fathers are taking an active role in nursing and rearing their children. The school curriculum was hailed by some of the participants for offering subjects such as life orientation that teaches and encourages young fathers to be involved in their children's lives. Boitshoko touched on this by drawing a distinction between old and young fathers. In addition, Boitshoko felt that older fathers had not received the necessary training on how to become emotionally involved with their children. The younger fathers, as she referred to them, had been raised in a generation that encouraged fathers to become emotionally involved in their children's lives.

#### **5.7.2. Present but uninvolved**

It has become apparent in recent research that fathers often find it difficult to relate to their daughters and, thus, even when present in the household, fathers are generally emotionally absent. Lesch et al. (2016) further contend that even father-daughter conversations tend to be centred on academics and real problems such as car problems. Some of the participants felt that, at times, fathers are just present in the household but not involved in the general activities of the house and, thus, it would make no difference if they were absent from the household.

**Dikeledi (FG1):** *"There are fathers who are in the household but those things that need a father's involvement they are not involved in, even though they are in the house. So, for me, same difference, whether he is there or not, it's just the same."*

Another participant pointed to the blatant ignorance of fathers in households:

**Maki (FG4):** *“... sometimes you can have a father in the house but who is completely ignorant or not even in the house for most of the time, he sleeps in the house, but he is mostly not around. He is not even concerned about what you do.”*

The participants also touched on the inability of resident fathers to participate in their children's education. Tshepiso and Naledi argued that fathers even failed to participate in the most elementary activities involved in a child's education such as registration at schools.

**Tshepiso (FG1):** *“Sometimes fathers at home [resident fathers] fail to participate in the child's school activities like registration – registration is often left to the mother.”*

**Naledi:** *“I don't remember my father attending even one school meeting. I would like him to ask me how my day was or even check my books and see how I am doing at school.”*

Leah argues that the fathers' lack of interest is often not only in their children's education but also in the children's extramural activities. She contended that black parents often fail to participate in their children's extramural activities. Boitshoko expressed the view that children would do much better in their sporting activities if their parents took an interest.

**Leah (FG2):** *“So, sometimes when the father is home [resident father], he might believe that, since [he is] present in the household, he sees the children coming and going then that is enough, but he is emotionally unavailable.”*

**Boitshoko (FG2):** *“It is very unfortunate that in black communities our parents are not involved in our sports activities. Some of the girls are very sporty and play sports like hockey and all those things. All this while the teachers are the ones cheering you on.”*

One thing that emerged vividly during interviews is that the role a father plays should go beyond his mere presence. The young women in this study felt that at times fathers mistake their physical presence for involvement and, as a result, forget or rather miss the opportunities

to be involved in areas that are important to children, for example sports or children's interests and their education.

### **5.7.3. Absent but involved**

In South Africa, as in many countries throughout the world, some non-resident black fathers play a crucial role in the general upbringing of the child (Makusha, Richter & Bhana 2012). The majority of the participants of this study expressed the belief that non-resident fathers tend to be more involved than resident fathers, often because they want to compensate for the time they have lost.

**Naledi:** *"Sometimes, when a father is away, he becomes concerned about the well-being of the child, unlike the father that is in the house who takes it for granted that he sees the child every day."*

**Seithathi (FG3):** *"My dad works outside town and, when he comes home during weekends, he tries to catch up with us – he sits down with us or take us out for ice-cream and catches up on what he has missed."*

Naledi also felt that, at times, non-resident fathers do not even have to wait for the weekend to catch up with their children.

**Naledi:** *"The one that lives far might even call you and ask how you are doing at school. They don't wait for the weekend."*

It was clear from the interviews that not all non-resident fathers are uninvolved in their children's lives. These fathers reside in separate locations from their children for reasons such as divorce, migrant labour, and parental separation, to mention a few, but are, nevertheless, very involved and they provide for their children. This opens a whole new debate on what constitutes father absence in modern terms – a discussion that further research should engage in.

#### 5.7.4. Present and involved

This theme was particularly important because most of the participants had a perception that resident fathers tend to be complacent and take it for granted that their presence in the household is sufficient.

**Dikeledi (FG1):** *“I believe when a father is in the house it’s better, because the support of the child is not just financial but also by seeing the things that she faces and assisting her, so go dula le ngwana go thusa thata (so being a resident father helps a lot).”*

Dikeledi believed that a father’s presence in the household is a predictor of fatherhood involvement and that resident fathers are in a better position than non-resident fathers to be involved in their children’s lives

In addition to the four themes outlined above, some of the young people were of the view that a father’s presence or absence in the household is not a determining factor of his involvement but, rather, that the determining factor is his willingness and interest.

**Thengiwe (FG3):** *“I think it depends on how far your father is willing to go in supporting you. Does he know the importance, does he understand? I think it depends on that”.*

**Thandi (FG3):** *“It depends on how interested he is.”*

The participants then shared their conceptualisation of involved fatherhood.

Bontle spoke about a daughter’s need to have a father, a pillar and a friend:

**Bontle (FG1):** *“A father should be someone who is a pillar for his daughter, he should have an open relationship with her mother. He should be a friend to his children.”*

Dieketseng, on the other hand, believed an involved father should be involved throughout all the stages of his child’s development and experience the child’s life challenges and victories with him/her:



**Dieketseng:** *“My understanding of fatherhood is a man who has been present throughout the life of a child, to be there when she explores new things like standing and walking for the first time, going to school, achieving good grades. Be there for the child in good times and bad times, help her through her challenges and celebrate with her when she overcomes [them].”*

The need for fathers to show love and affection dominated the discussion on father presence and involvement:

**Lerato (FG3):** *“...if a child needs something from him, a father must make time for her child, a mo rate (love her)”*

**Mpho:** *“... as long as he gives you love, that’s enough”*

**Lebo:** *“... I feel like a father should be there from birth to show love and support, take care of the child.”*

It is clear that a father’s presence plays a very important role in a child’s development. The literature cited in earlier chapters also alluded to this. It is important, therefore, that fathers are not only physically present in the lives of their children but that they also play an active role. According to the discussion above, an active role includes, but is not limited to, being a pillar of strength for the children, showing them love and affection and being their friend.

#### **5.7.5. Absent and uninvolved**

As mentioned in previous sections, South Africa has one of the highest rates of absent fathers and maintenance defaulters. It was, therefore, not surprising that this theme arose during interviews. As the objective of this research was to study the experiences of young women raised in non-resident households, it was obvious that the issue of physically absent and uninvolved fathers would receive much attention. The participants acknowledged that there may have been conflict between their parents but failed to understand why parents had involved them in their fights. A few of the participants emphasised the fact that a father should

find ways of being in his child's life regardless of what happens between him and the child's mother.

**Thuto:** *"Even if he had issues with my mother, that had nothing to do with me, not at all. Carletonville is a few minutes away, he could have chosen to be in my life and not have anything to do with my mother."*

Lebo added.

**Lebo:** *"Thing is your child, it doesn't matter what happens between you and the mother of the child... your child is your child."*

**Thuto:** *"I was in Grade 12 and he called me out of the blue and I had no idea where he got my number from. Then he said he was going to come see me ... expectations ... I expected him to come. Did he come? No. Like when I was six years old. I expected him to come and he never came."*

**Lebo:** *"He [my father] had no interest in my life from birth until now ..."*

However, not all absent fathers are uninvolved by choice. The young women alluded to the fact that fathers are sometimes uninvolved because they are unaware of the fact that they are fathers because, at times, mothers hide the truth about the paternity of the child. According to Manyatshe et al. (2016), although children often want to know more about their fathers, they tend to be hesitant to ask their mothers. However, the participants in the study also acknowledged that mothers sometimes choose to conceal the paternity of the father for various reasons. These reasons range from the father's denial of paternity to the mother's indiscretion.

**Tshepiso (FG1):** *"Sometimes the mother became pregnant while she was still at school and, when she told her boyfriend, the boy denied paternity of the child. As a result the mother will not reveal to the child who the real father is."*

**Gadifele (FG1):** *“Sometimes the reason for non-disclosure is because the mother slept with a stranger not knowing that they were related. When the truth of their family relations comes out she becomes too embarrassed to reveal the child’s paternity.”*

**Charmaine (FG1):** *“Sometimes the child is conceived by a mother who was a prostitute and she is scared to tell the child the truth.”*

Some of the participants understood fatherhood based on their observations of other fathers. It became clear during the interviews that most of these young women were experiencing a deep sense of longing for a more involved and interactive father-daughter relationship.

## **5.8. Consequence of absent fatherhood**

Embedded in family research is the principle of linked lives. This principle is based on the notion that an individual’s influence has an impact on other family members’ experiences and attainments over a life course (Macmillan & Copher 2005). For example, a father who abandons the family, especially if he is the sole breadwinner, leaves the remaining family members struggling to make ends meet. On the other hand, a newborn baby may bring stability and happiness to a newly married couple. Furthermore, the principle of life course perspective, linked lives, suggests that the age at which the parent abandoned the child is key in determining the child’s outlook on life. According to Jackson (2010), father absence is linked often to a daughter’s low self-esteem, loss of trust in other men and creates negative self-image. The sub-themes that follow discuss how father absence was linked with negative effects on the young women in this study.

### **5.8.1. Lack of trust**

According to Lesch et al. (2014), a daughter’s ability to trust, enjoy and relate well with other males is influenced primarily by her father. Most of the participants in this study referred to their distrust of other men because the one man who was supposed to teach them how to trust other men had not been present in their lives. Some young women, such as Relebogile, compare every man they meet with the father who abandoned them. Thus, in their mistrust of

men they try to avoid the same mistakes that their mothers and friends made of having children out of wedlock and raising them alone because the father has disappeared.

**Relebogile:** *"I don't trust any guy. A few of my friends got pregnant and the boyfriends fled. Some don't even support their kids. It would be like history repeating itself and stuff like that. I grew up without a father and now my child will have to grow up without a father."*

**Tshegofatso:** *"To be honest, I didn't have trust towards men, because, like I feel, like my father was also untrustworthy, so these people [men] are all the same... Argh."*

**Thengiwe (FG3):** *"You end up being judgemental towards men and you end up not trusting them."*

It is important to note that the experiences of young women being raised by single mothers are also reinforced by the environment in which they live as well as their friends' experiences.

### **5.8.2. Cross-generational relationships**

A cross-generational relationship is, typically, a relationship that involves two people who are at least 10 years apart in age (Luke & Kurz 2002). There are a number of reasons why women, especially those below the age of 20, become involved in cross-generational relationships but the most common reason is the need for financial support. Due to the harsh reality that some of the participants had lived in households where a single mother or a grandmother had struggled to make ends meet, some had resorted to cross-generational relationships (commonly known as sugar daddies in South Africa) as a way of survival. Lerato, a 25-year-old woman raised by her grandmother, explained how she had started dating older men around the age of fifteen as a way to buy toiletries and other necessities.

**Lerato:** *"When I was young, I think I was 15 or 16, I began being very disobedient, I didn't listen to my grandmother, I would go out and come back late, very late, like I began dating older men with cars for money so I can buy toiletries. So, I thought, maybe it's best for me to date those older men so I can get money to buy toiletries for*

*myself.”*

**Thengiwe (FG3):** *“In most cases girls depend on people from outside like sugar daddies because they did not receive the love of the father.”*

Dikeledi added:

**Dikeledi (FG1):** *“You find that, due to fatherlessness, girls end up dating older men because their fathers were not there to validate them and tell them they are beautiful, so girls date these men to hear these words.”*

**Bontle (FG1):** *... not having a father to tell you that you are beautiful, you end up running to older men to gain attention and their affection. When you are approached by older men you end up thinking, I don’t have a father so let me use this to my advantage.”*

Gadifele also expanded on this issue, saying:

**Gadifele (FG1):** *“Sometimes in the household your mother does not work and your father is not present to support the family, you end up giving yourself to older men in order for them to provide you with money.”*

According to Perkins (2001), an important feature of a healthy father-daughter relationship is its potential to positively shape interactions between women and other men. The lack of such a relationship tends to result in girls searching for love and approval in the wrong places and in the arms of men who may take advantage of them. In addition, even when they do find genuine love they do not know how to behave in these relationships.

**Relebogile:** *“I told myself that if I went and looked for someone who will love me, I thought it would replace the space that my father left, but it didn’t. I went on to look for love in the wrong places.”*

Thuto added:

**Thuto:** *“You know that saying; girls date their fathers? I have been in two or three*

*relationships that I knew were wrong relationships. I know I am not treated right, but I am like, I am going to stay anyway because I want to prove a point. Like abandonment issues, somebody mistreating you... cheating, lying and still you don't want them to leave."*

**Leah (FG2):** *Going back to the fact that sometimes girls go out to seek out love because they have never experienced a father's love. They are trying to fill that void with things that might hurt them at the end of the day. So, we need our father to teach us how a man should treat you. I think that is why girls end up having sugar daddies, because they get from them what their fathers did not give them. They get money and what they assume is love, but they don't know because they have never had it – "that love". So, I think it is very important that a father be present, especially in a girl's life...it is deep."*

Thuto admitted during the interview that one of the reasons why she clung to the males she was dating, even although she knew they were not good for her, could be because she is trying to prevent them from leaving her like her father had. She further believed that, if there has been a male presence in the house, she probably would not have behaved that way or she would have behaved differently with the boys/men she had dated.

Bontle also touched on how fatherless young women tend to over compensate when they enter into relationships.

**Bontle (FG1):** *"It also affects your relationships – when you are in a relationship you tend to give your boyfriend all the attention, you go an extra mile, at times you don't even listen [to] your mother, for example, when you are supposed to perform your house chores and your boyfriend comes around you would rather defy your parents. You sacrifice everything to go out with him, it's like you are brainwashed. I think if a father was present those things would not happen."*

As daughters the participants expressed a need to be validated and affirmed by their fathers.

Many of them were of the view that a father's validation and affirmation would have saved them from a lot of risky behaviour but, beyond that, they also believed it would have improved their lives. The motivation for dating older men, according to the participants, is, firstly, a need to be loved and validated with this validation often being well received when it comes from older men. Secondly, financial difficulties at home often drive women to seek older, romantic partners to provide for them. Luke & Kurz (2002) found that there are young women who date older men, not for affirmation or for financial gain, but rather because they prefer dating older and more experienced men. However, this was not a finding in this research study.

### **5.8.3. Feelings of anger**

Father absence had left many of the participants feeling angry, frustrated, confused and despondent. Ramphela (2002) contends that fatherlessness creates a generation of children who experience a deep sense of loss and confusion and that these children usually experience emotional disturbances and depression. Similar results were found in this study, for example, Lerato summed up her feelings of anger and frustration as follows:

**Lerato:** *"Painful because, at school, I didn't have time for my books, I didn't do my school work every time I went to school. I was angry, asking myself 'Why am I alive?' Because there is nothing, I don't have both parents. My mother does not call, does not do anything, she doesn't even ask me how I woke up, what am I eating, how did I sleep, how am I bathing and, again, what I can say is my life was miserable."*

Thuto continued:

**Thuto:** *"In a way it made me angry because I hate the fact that you fathered a child and then you can go and live somewhere else with another family. Yet you do not know how that child is doing, whether they are eating or they are clothed. Honestly, I am angry with my father – even if he had issues with my mother that had nothing to do with me, not at all. He could ... Carletonville is only a few minutes away."*

In addition to the feelings of anger and frustration at their fathers' failure to provide for basic

needs of their children, one participant also blamed her father for the way in which her life had turned out. Pragmatic agency implies that people choose a certain response which is guided by the self and by values that people choose when their habitual values break down (Carpenter 2010). Anger is a form of pragmatic agency that young women often choose as in response to father abandonment.

**Mpho:** *“About anger, that is one of the things that I once experienced, because there was a time I had asked for something from my dad and he did not do it and wanted to do it at his own time. So, I ended up blaming him for certain things that did not go accordingly in my life. For example, I ended up telling my dad that I wished it was him who had died and not my mom because, my mom was alive, I think she would have been able to guide me with regard to school, obviously, you know how life is after matric. So I was angry to a point that I said those words to him. Then there was a time he asked how I was doing in school, even then I said things to him that I wish I had not said, because I had blamed him for a lot of things.”*

Some of the participants also described how they had projected the anger and frustrations they had experienced because of their absent fathers onto other men. Boitshoko and Tshegofatso stated:

**Boitshoko (FG2):** *“Sometimes having a dad, but who is not emotionally present, you are not able to reach out to this person and say this is what I am struggling with. This results in deep anger, the fact that these questions are unanswered, you become very angry as a child. And you become very hard towards men. You build a wall. You tell yourself ‘You know what, if you are a male and think you are going to come into my life, you have to be ready’. This is why I say fathers need to make us comfortable and teach us and show us the comfort from males, especially our dads.”*



**Tshegofatso:** *“And I would feel like arg! Let me just give up. I started having a lot of things, thinking like everything would go away. It also made [me] develop anger towards men and feeling that men are irresponsible.”*

Daughters tend to project their feelings of anger towards their fathers onto other men they encounter as they grow up as a result of their perception that, if a man who was supposed to be there for them emotionally failed, how would it ever be possible for a complete stranger be able to fill that gap.

#### **5.8.4. Financial difficulties**

Nthabiseng and Lerato were both raised by their grandmothers while their mothers lived in a different town. They both shared how their mothers had failed to send money back home to assist their grandmothers to maintain them and as a result, they had had to depend on their grandmothers' old age grant. Both participants explained the harsh household realities they had encountered and having to eat pap and water and jam at times.

**Nthabiseng:** *“My grandmother would make sure that we do not need food but, at times, I would notice when we lacked things. There were times when we would eat pap with water and, at times, pap with spinach. My mother tried to contribute financially but she couldn't. She told me that she earned R300 weekly and had to pay for rent and transport and buy food and clothes.”*

**Lerato:** *“It was hard to survive because my mother was not sending money home, so we lived off my grandmother's grant. Sometimes we went to bed on empty stomachs. Sometimes we would eat pap and jam, like that was the life we lived.”*

There are also often financial challenges in a household when a father dies, especially if the father was a sole breadwinner. Death as a turning point is often one of the reasons why the family members left behind experience socioeconomic difficulties.

**Leah (FG2):** *“I haven't experienced it personally, but I have seen it with my friend. When her father passed away, there were financial struggles especially because the*

*father was the breadwinner and the mother struggled to take care of the children.”*

The absence of a father in a household often has a negative impact on the lives of children. In the case of Leah's friend the turning point brought about by the death of a father had a negative effect on the lives of the family members left behind. As stated in previous sections the lives of all the members in a household are linked and, thus, any transition may affect the family negatively.

In conclusion, father absence often has dire consequences on the children. As was seen in this study father-daughter relationships are a significant predictor of how girls interact with the opposite sex (Krohn & Bogan 2001). Thus, father absence may potentially affect girl children's future life courses and the decisions they may make. Certain participants expressed feelings of hurt and anger towards their absent fathers and many had projected these feelings onto other males. The deep need for father affirmation was apparent in the responses of the participants of this study with many expressing that the feeling that they could have avoided a lot of hardships if their fathers had been present in their lives. The failure of fathers to provide love to their children as the first lovers of their children had driven some of these participants to seek love in other places, in the hope of replacing their father's love and filling the void that fatherlessness had caused.

## **5.9. Social fathering**

In view of the high rates of parental separation, divorce and paternal death, to mention a few, children are likely to find themselves being fathered by men other than their biological fathers. These men are known as social fathers. They may be uncles, stepfathers and the mothers' partners but, no matter who they are, these men have been known to fill the gap that an absent father leaves in the life of the child. Not all the participants in this study were familiar with the term "social father" and, in all the interviews conducted, I first had to define the concept of a social father. However, the majority of these young women had had a man in their lives who had played the role of social father, despite the fact that some had failed to fill the gap left by the biological father and some had even become abusive. Nevertheless, Jayakody & Kalil

(2002) note that children may develop healthy relationships with men who play a father role despite the fact that these men are not their biological fathers.

### **5.9.1 Who are the social fathers?**

This section sought to establish which men are likely to play the role of the social father. As pointed out in **section 1.5** a social father is “a male relative or a family associate or a community member who undertakes the role of a father in the absence of a biological father”.

The majority of the participants who mentioned male relatives who supported or took an interest in their lives cited uncles, especially maternal uncles, as playing the role of the social father.

**Modiegi (FG3):** *“My uncle, I have a best friend uncle whom I share everything with.”*

**Lerato:** *“My uncle was around, I never had a stepfather.”*

**Dieketseng:** *“My uncle was like my father because he came to my house each and every day after work to come check-up on my grandmother and as a result I would talk to him, telling him of what happened during the day, a lot of things that I was supposed to discuss with my father I discussed with him.”*

**Nthabiseng:** *“My uncle was the person that I looked up to after the passing of my father and the only reason I went to live with them was because my school was near.”*

South African families are becoming increasingly blended, especially in view of the number of children born out of wedlock, the rate of divorce and the prevalence of paternal death through diseases such as HIV/AIDS. It, therefore, comes as no surprise that stepfathers/mothers' romantic partners are increasingly assuming the role of a social father.

**Tshegofatso:** *“My stepfather is my social father, the relationship between me and my stepfather ene ele shapo (was fine).”*

**Abigail (FG2):** *“I have a stepfather.”*

**Thengiwe (FG3):** *“I once had a stepfather and I was in primary [school].”*

**Maki (FG4):** *“I had a stepfather. He met my mother when I was three.”*

Depending on the age gap between older brothers and their younger siblings, these older brothers are often regarded by their siblings as social fathers. Hunter (2006) contends that, in most traditions, a father assumes the role of head of the house and, in his absence, this function falls to the eldest son with the result that, at times, young women regard the role that older brothers play as comparable to that of a father.

**Dikeledi:** *“My brother played the role of a father. Although there are things that I went through that needed the guidance of a father but I think so far he has played that role.”*

The role of spiritual leaders is an important one, especially in Christian communities. Pastors and spiritual leaders are often referred to as the fathers of their congregants and, as a result, they tend to assume the role of a father in the lives of individuals in their assemblies.

**Lebo:** *“My pastor and my spiritual brother.”*

Maternal grandfathers usually assume the role of fatherhood in instances where the mother falls pregnant at an early age. However, this role is often extended when the biological father denies the child, fails to pay damages and also in the period between the birth of the child and the payment of *lobola*.

**Relebogile:** *“I had my grandfather, but he moved away when I was doing Grade 9. He moved to another area.”*

After establishing who the social fathers are, it is important to ascertain whether the role that these men play contributes towards either the positive or the negative development of young women. It is important to note the argument that the social father may not necessarily replace the biological father but will be in a position to fill the gap that the biological father has left. Abigail expresses how her social father had filled the gap that her biological father had left.

However, even with that being the case, she still considered herself to be fatherless because the man who was supposed to play the role of a father had abandoned that role.

**Abigail (FG2):** *"I don't talk to him, but I only talk to him when my mom is around.*

*However, he has been there as a father and closed the gap that I don't have a father because he [biological father] left when I was very little."*

In a South African study conducted by Ramphele & Richter (2006), titled "Migrancy, family dissolution and fatherhood", the participants of the study described the protection, care and support they had received from social fathers within the community and how this had been important for their development. Some of the participants in this study attested to the findings of Ramphele and Richter's study.

**Lebo:** *I remember a lot about my stepfather because I did not even know he was my stepfather until I was 12 [years old]. He was basically like my father. It actually made me realise that maybe the reason why I am mad at my father is because I keep comparing him to my stepfather, because my stepfather was an absolute sweetheart, like I remember each and everything about him. When he would get me ready for school, when he would help me with my Grade 1 homework, when he would like buy me stuff even when my mother told him not to buy me stuff like sweets and whatever. I absolutely loved him."*

**Refilwe (FG4):** *"I grew up in a good family. I used to stay with my aunt and her husband and that man treated me like his own. He treated us [his children and me] as equals."*

**Thembeke (FG4):** *"Sometimes growing up with a social father is nice, because they become fathers and make you feel at home."*

Thengiwe admits that although her social father made attempts to become a good father to her, it become difficult for her to appreciate him because she felt that he was trying to replace her own father.

**Thengiwe (FG3):** *"I once had a stepfather when I was in primary [school]. I did not appreciate him, because I wondered why it was that my dad [biological father] could not do all these things for me. He did everything for me but I did not appreciate him and did not take him as my family. I felt he wanted to replace my father and I wanted my real dad. Sometimes it is not about money but love and support."*

Contrary to Abigail, Modiegi described her uncle as a best friend, with whom she was able to discuss almost everything, including romantic relationships.

**Modiegi:** *"I am not even afraid to talk to my uncle about relationships, because he accepts me the way I am, he makes me understand life because he is married, he has been there. He is the only person that I grew up considering as a father in my life."*

Lebo recalled nothing but fond memories of her late stepfather. In fact, her stepfather had taken such good care of her that she had not realised that he was not her biological father. Another important theme that arose in her extract was how she had compared her loving stepfather to her biological father who was absent and, as a result, she was angry with her absent father for a long time. Social fatherhood as a concept comes about as a result of a number of transitions that may occur within specific families. The first transition is the high rate of teenage pregnancy in South Africa. The more children born out of wedlock the greater the chance that children will be raised by a stepfather should the relationship between the child's mother and father collapse. The second possible transition is divorce which is often linked with the transition of remarriage. Thus, as marriages break down, the remarriage transition means that the new husbands will become social fathers in cases where the mothers have children from previous marriages. Thirdly, there are the transitions related to work which force men to seek migrant work, leaving uncles, grandfathers and brothers having to fill the position of the father. The fourth transition is paternal death. When fathers die, the remaining men in the family and in society evidently assume the role of a social father.

However, some social fathers are known to be abusive towards their children with some participants in the study recounting emotional, sexual and physical abuse at the hands of their social fathers. On the other hand, Bonolo grew up seeing her social father physically abusing her mother:

**Bonolo (FG2):** *I didn't like him because he was beating my mother. I was happy when he died, but I was later sad because my mom and little sister miss him."*

Lerato was another such participant.

**Lerato:** *"I only stayed with my parents once, during school holidays, my father would hit my mother almost every day and all that, sometimes he would hit us too. This is the reason why my mother ran away from her house in Orkney to go to live in Potchefstroom."*

There are also cases where the abuse by the social father spills over to the children and, at times, the mothers are too afraid to stop the physical abuse of their children at the hands of their lovers. According to Makusha (2014), children are often exposed to emotional violence as a result of witnessing the violence inflicted to their mothers by their fathers and other males in the household.

**Maki (FG4):** *"One day he beat [me] so bad that I got a blue eye and wished my mother was home to stop him. He would throw me out of the house and my mom did not say anything. I would sleep in the street, in neighbours' yards. He beat my mother as well. They divorced in 2015."*

Coupled with the physical abuse is also the emotional abuse social fathers may inflict on young women

**Lerato:** *"But he never played the role of a father. The one thing he loved saying was: "Go to your mother and tell her what you need". There would be school trips and my*

*uncle would pay for my cousin and buy her everything and not pay for me. At times my uncle would give her money in front of me and not give me.”*

**Maki (FG4):** *“The relationship got better but he changed in later years and would tell me I am not his child.”*

Lerato felt that her social father had treated his own children better than he had treated her and he would always remind her that her father was not present in her life, either verbally or through his actions.

Some of the participants had experienced sexual violence at the hands of their social fathers. WHO (2002; 149) defines sexual violence as “Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise direct women’s sexuality, using coercion (i.e. psychological intimidation, physical force or threat of harm), by a person, regardless of relationship to the victim, in any setting including, but not limited to, home and work”. Some of the participants narrated painful stories of sexual violence.

**Charmaine (FG1):** *“The presence of my social father has caused me a lot of pain because he would bring his drunkard friends to the house and sometimes he would leave them in the house. He is the reason why one of his friends raped me (cries).”*

Charmaine, although she had not been sexually abused directly by her social father, blamed him for bringing his friends to the house and leaving her exposed in their company. Dikeledi, on the other hand, had been sexually abused by a man who was renting a back room in their yard.

**Dikeledi:** *“I was raped by a man who was renting a room at home. It is a painful thing, you become close to someone and then, the next thing, they take advantage of you.”*

Florence and Bontle had both experienced their social fathers making sexual advances towards them in the form of sexual comments.



**Florence (FG1):** *“One evening I was standing with my friends at the gate, and my stepfather locked me out (cries). After our chat I went and knocked at the door, he had been drinking when he opened the door, he told me he had a dream that we [myself and him] were dating. This man is married to my mother. After that he insisted that I kiss him, I rushed to my mother’s room and I told her what he had said to me. She brushed me off.”*

**Bontle (FG1):** *“He [uncle] would enter the room while I am bathing and pretend to be searching for something, he would call me names like Sarah Baartman. I think [if] he ever had a chance to be alone with me in the house things would have gotten messy.”*

The participants who had experienced sexual violence had either never reported the case before out of fear of losing the financial privileges that social fathers bring to the house, or out of fear of dividing the family. Some also cited the fear that people may not believe them and others the fear they may be blamed for the social father’s conduct. In the case of Dikeledi, for example, she spoke to a friend as she was fearful of speaking to her mother. The following extracts relate the different types of actions that the young women took after the abuse and the reasons why some decided not to tell anybody or feared to take action. However, it is worrying to note the fact that not one of these fathers was reported to the police.

**Dikeledi (FG1):** *“When I got raped, I told my friend and she told her mother, who subsequently told my mother, but my mother kept quiet about it.”*

**Florence (FG1):** *“They [social fathers] when you threaten to report them to social workers for example, they in turn threaten to stop providing for you financially.”*

**Bontle (FG1):** *“Somebody cautioned me that if I remain in the same house as my uncle he might rape me and use my history against me and claim that I seduced him. I used to date older men and I didn’t care who says what to me.”*

It is clear from the extracts above that the role of social fathers may be both positive and negative. A good, loving and caring social fathers is able to close the gap left by the biological

father although, for some young women, it become difficult to accept the love of the social father, especially if the biological father is failing to provide it. On the negative side, some of the participants had experienced brutality at the hands of their social fathers for example, sexual, emotional, psychological and physical violence had been perpetrated by the social fathers and those close to the participants. As already stated, not one of the cases of abuse outlined above was reported to the police and this is a worrying factor. This also affirms the notion of patriarchy in terms of which men have financial and other forms of power over women. I have referred all the victims of rape to the Family and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSA) in the Ikageng service office and provided them with the contact numbers of the social worker whom I had requested to be on standby during the interviews (see ethical clearance in Chapter 4 Methodology).

### **5.9.2 Stepmothers as stumbling blocks**

Some of the participants cited the role of stepmother as one of the reasons why fathers opt to stay away from their daughters. The role of stepmothers, although not directly studied in this research, also came to the fore with stepmothers being portrayed as stumbling blocks hindering the relationship between the fathers and their daughters. The participants in the study indicated that they tended not to have good relationships with their stepmothers. One of the reasons given was that stepmothers often feel threatened by their stepdaughters. The inability of stepmothers and stepdaughters to establish a healthy relationship is seen as one of the major reasons why stepmothers exert pressure on fathers and force them to choose between the stepmother (father's wife) and the daughters (father's biological children). Unfortunately, the majority of fathers choose their wives and neglect their children. However, there are always two sides to every story and, thus, it is important for future research to try to understand the dynamics between stepmothers and their stepdaughters. Further to this, the participants in the study felt that their stepmothers perceived them as a bigger threat to their relationships as they feared that the father may reconcile with the mother as a result of the daughter's influence. This is another result that requires further inquiry.

Modiegi describes her stepmother as the reason why her father had stopped being involved in her life.

**Modiegi:** *“Apparently after his wife found out my father had an older child they got married soon after ... I tried to have a relationship with his wife, but she was pretending. You could see she felt as though I am going to take her space because, once the family found out about me, they gave me a lot of attention.”*

Nielson (2012) claims that once fathers remarry, they often try to foster a relationship between their new wives and their daughters. If they fail in this endeavour they feel discouraged, despondent and frustrated. In addition, a failure to foster this relationship normally leaves fathers caught between their desire to have healthy relationships with their daughters while, simultaneously, trying to strengthen the bonds with their new wives and children. In the main, the failure to establish these bonds leads to fights between the stepmother and the stepchild, thus putting the father in the awkward position of having to choose a side.

**Relebogile:** *“So my stepmother and I don’t get along, so most of the time I go to my father’s place, we end up fighting, and my father would obviously take her side and not mine. So I ended up feeling like my dad doesn’t care about me.”*

The participants believed that, whenever a conflict arose between them and their stepmothers, the fathers are compelled to choose a side and, in their experience, the fathers tend to choose the stepmother’s side over that of his daughter.

## **5.10 Conclusion**

The participants in the study expressed their deep need to form close bonds with their biological fathers. Even in instances where a social father was available the need to have a biological father present still resonated. Many of the participants had either never met their fathers or had met them for brief periods in their lives only and they expressed the wish that this could have been longer.

Certain of the participants felt that it would have been easier to discuss certain issues with

their fathers rather than with their mothers and, thus, most of them blamed the direction their lives had taken on the fathers who had left. The participants mentioned it is easier to discuss topics such as how to treat boys, how to be romantically involved with boys and how to know when a boy is truly in love with you with fathers as opposed to mothers. Of all the participants of this study only one participant admitted to having a child out of wedlock and, in her view, this could have been avoided if a father had been present in the household to offer support, care and advice.

The role played by stepmothers and social fathers also came under scrutiny during interviews. Stepmothers have the potential and ability to becoming a stumbling block between children and their fathers. Some of the participants blamed the father absence on their stepmothers. One the participants narrated how the arrival of her stepmother took her father away. While the other believed that her stepmother felt threaten by her relationship with her father. Whether these observation by the participants are accurate or not, is a construct that needs further investigation. However, it is apparent that participants' feelings of their stepmothers are a stumbling block that restricts a healthy father-daughter relationship.

On the other hand, the role of social fathers is one that cannot be ignored. Social fathers play an important role in the lives of the children. Most of the participants in this study could relate to this concept, when asked about who played this role in their lives, participants cited maternal and paternal uncles and grandfathers, stepfathers and older brothers. However, it has become clear that the mere presence of social father, though beneficial, does not fill the void left by a biological father. However, some of the participants note an honest and genuine attempt by their social fathers to fill the void that their biological fathers left, while others felt abused and attacked by their social fathers. Some participants shared the verbal and sometimes physical abuse they suffered at the hands of their social fathers.

However, the challenges encountered by the young women in this study are in line with a recent study conducted in South Africa by researchers among others (Eddy et al. 2013; Nduna et al. 2012; Khewu et al. 2015). This study has also revealed the important role that the social

father plays in the lives of daughters whose biological fathers are absent. The positive roles social fathers assume include, among other, providing support to the mothers, showing love and care to the children and providing emotional and financial support.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### **6.1. Introduction**

This concluding chapter revisits the problem statement, the research methodology used and demographics of the participants. In addition, the chapter briefly outlines the main findings of the study as well as the strengths and limitations of the study. Finally, recommendations for future research are made.

### **6.2. Demographics of the participants**

Focus group and face-to-face interviews were conducted with a sample comprising a total of 34 young women. All the participants were resident in the Tlokwe Local Municipality in the North West Province and were between the ages of 18 and 25 at the time of the interviews. A common characteristic of the participants was that they had been raised in households without their biological fathers. They had either lost their fathers through death, divorce, separation or abandonment. In order to protect the identities of the participants I used pseudonyms. Not one of the participants were forced to participate in the study. Informed consent forms were issued and the main objectives of the study thoroughly explained before the interviews commenced. In addition, I obtained permission from the participants to use a tape recorder. Permission to utilise the tape recorder during all the interviews was granted (see Appendix D). Furthermore, field notes were taken during interviews and these were later incorporated into the transcriptions of the interviews.

### **6.3. Summary of findings**

The main research question posed in this study was: *What are the experiences of young adult women raised in a household without their fathers?*

Four subsidiary questions were formulated in order to effectively answer the main research question:

- How do adult women who grew up in non-resident father households conceptualise fatherhood?

- What are the challenges that young adult women experience as a result of having a non-resident father?
- What are the challenges of growing up in a non-resident father households for young adult women?
- What are the experiences young adult women have of adult men (other than biological fathers) taking on caring roles towards them?

### **6.3.1. Women's conceptualisation of fathers**

As stated in chapter 1 of this study, there is no universally agreed upon definition of fatherhood. This section answers the first subsidiary question on the conceptualisation of fatherhood by discussing the general understanding of what fatherhood entails according to the young adult women's responses in the interviews. Although a considerable number of the participants had been raised in households without a male figure, each one of them had a notion of what a father should be and what role he should play in a child's life, particularly a girl-child's life. Some of the participants acknowledged that their conceptualisation of what ideal fatherhood entails and the functions a father should play had been acquired primarily from the media as well as from their friends who were raised in resident father households. That being said, most of them mentioned the uncomfortable feeling they had experienced every time their friends had mentioned the topic of fatherhood with some stating that they would avoid being part of these conversations while some remembered trying to stifle these conversations by changing the subject to something more favourable and less painful for them. Previous research on fatherhood has highlighted, among others, four conceptualisations of fatherhood, namely, fathers as patriarchs, fathers as financial providers, fathers as protectors and the concept of new fatherhood (Rabe 2006; Kelly 2013; Eddy 2013; Richter et al. 2013). These four conceptualisations of fatherhood also came to the fore in this study. However, despite the fact that the participants highlighted the importance of fathers as moral guides and teachers in the household, some also acknowledges that, at times, the mother's presence had been enough to bring about order and stability in the house. The mothers who managed to do

this were described by the participants as strict mothers. In addition, the acceptance of discipline and respect for their mothers were reinforced by the struggles that the participants had witnessed their mothers going through to provide for them. They expressed how they did not want to disappoint their mothers, especially because they had seen them work at two jobs at a time to provide food in the house.

As stated earlier, Eddy et al. (2013) found that the majority of fathers appear to feel that their importance is limited only to their ability to provide for their children financially. However, the participants had a different view on the matter. They felt that a father's emotional presence was more important than his financial status. They further recognised that money is important and necessary for survival but, nevertheless, they believed that a father's emotional presence and, consequently, his involvement in a child's life should be paramount. The participants expressed the need for an involved father with the word support being mentioned frequently during the interviews. This support, according to the participants, includes, but is not limited to, fathers showing an interest in the young women's education, romantic relationships and household discipline. Some expressed the need to have a serious talk with their fathers about life and the challenges they faced on a day to day basis.

The participants also expressed a need for protection, including, among others, protection from boys and their ideas, protection from older men and protection from bodily harm. The participants were of the view that the men who threatened their safety did so because they knew that they did not have a father to protect them. Some of the participants blamed the abuse they had suffered on the absence of their fathers, citing that criminals, for example, tend to target households without a father. However, according to Clowes et al. (2013), protection in this context also includes protection from financial hardship. Some of the participants had grown up in financially unstable households and this had opened the door for predatory men to enter through the back door and promise these young women a better life. The participants touched on the concept of new fatherhood. This was not discussed at length but aspects associated with this concept were highlighted. The participants also articulated



the need for fathers to be more than just spectators in their children's lives. They felt that a father should worry about his child's well-being, worry about her education and be available to talk to the child and offer advice on relationships and how to avoid heartache.

### **6.3.2. Challenges experienced by females raised in non-resident father households**

It has been found that father presence has positive developmental outcomes for children (Swartz et al. 2013) while there is also evidence to suggest that father absence has negative consequences for the general well-being of a child (Eddy et al. 2013). According to Lesch et al. (2014), there is a link between a lack of paternal involvement and teenager substance abuse and delinquent behaviour. The participants also indicated that they had encountered some of the challenges as outlined by Lesch et al. (2013) with some of the participants becoming involved in delinquent behaviour in an attempt to get back at their fathers for their being absent. Relebogile, for example, explained she would become involved in problem behaviour in the hope that her father would intervene. She explained how, in her house where, at the time of the study, she was living with her 23-year-old sister and that they both came and went as they pleased with neither reprimanding the other. Another challenge cited was that the young women felt that their childhood had been stolen. Their mothers had had to work as domestics and, thus, they had been forced to grow up too quickly in order to assist their mothers with the household chores while she was out working two jobs at a time. An important point in this discussion was the poverty experienced by most households when a father was absent. The young women narrated with pain instances where they had gone to bed on empty stomachs and not knowing where the next meal would come from. Nevertheless, the role played by mothers was cited as one of the most important factors in families' survival.

### **6.3.3. Experiences of women raised in non-resident father households**

The experiences of young women raised in non-resident father households varied considerably. Some of the women felt their mothers had played a good enough role so that that father absence was almost unnoticed. These young women explained that their mothers had coped with the financial struggles. Some of the participants reported that their experiences

of being raised in non-resident father households as positive because there had been members of the family, such as maternal uncles, who were always available to assist with provisions whenever their mothers were unable to. Another participant reported that she had consciously blocked out the fact that her father had abandoned her and, as a result, she never felt the impact of her father's absence. However, the rest of the participants used words such as tough, difficult and painful to characterise their experiences of growing up in a non-resident father household.

#### **6.3.4. Consequences of being raised in non-resident father households**

It would appear that there is an intergenerational link between fathers and their daughters which persists throughout the life course. For example, fatherless daughters tend to distrust other males. The participants cited their lack of trust towards men. Although these feelings were, at times, reinforced by the experiences of their friends and family, a large portion of them were caused by the fact that they did not have a father in their lives. The most adverse consequences of absent biological fathers described by the young women in this study included the sexual violence they had suffered at the hands of males (not their biological fathers) who were meant to protect them. Three of the participants disclosed incidents of sexual violence that had been perpetrated against them. They all felt that they would not have been victims of this type of violence had their biological fathers been present and involved in their lives. In addition, the participants felt that, as a result of not having a father in the house, the challenges experienced in the household, particularly the financial challenges, often meant that women were forced resort to other means to meet their basic necessities including becoming involved in cross-generational relationships. Cross-generational relationships involve dating men ten years and older than the women. In South Africa these men are referred to as sugar daddies. Finally, failure to perform at school was another consequence for which the fathers were blamed by some participants. According to Lesch et al. (2014), paternal involvement is a predictor of a daughter's school performance and career success and, thus, a father's absence often affects a girl's school performance.

### **6.3.5. Advantages and disadvantages of social fatherhood**

The role played by social fathers in child-rearing may not be overlooked, especially in a generation where most biological fathers appear to be disappearing. Two extremes emerged on the subject of social fathers. On the one hand, some of the participants felt loved, supported and cared for by their social fathers while, at the other extreme, the participants had been abused by their social fathers. All the participants had had a personal experience of a social father with these fathers varying from stepfathers, to uncles, to brothers to grandfathers. According to the responses of the participants some social fathers appeared to have a genuine effort to fill the gap left by the biological fathers left and some these participants, particularly those who had had social fathers at an early age, felt that these fathers had succeeded in closing this gap. However, the participants also explained that, at times it had become difficult to accept and embrace the love given by the social father because they had either felt as if these men were trying to replace their biological fathers or they felt uneasy by accepting love from someone other than their biological father, especially since the latter had abandoned them. Nonetheless, it is clear that some men are playing the role of the social father and are making meaningful contributions to the well-being of young women.

On the other hand, there are social fathers who are taking advantage of the power and position ascribed to them with some of the participants reporting being victims of abuse at the hands of their social fathers. This abuse, as defined by these participants, included sexual, emotional and physical with some of the participants being victims of sexual abuse as defined in section 5.9. There were participants who reported being verbally abused by their uncles and grandfathers while some were told to go back to their mothers' houses because they were a financial burden on the breadwinner (in this instance, an uncle, brother or grandfather). Even more worrying was the finding that some of the participants had been physically abused, sometimes in the presence of a mother who was afraid to intervene. One participant reports that there had been instances when her stepfather would throw her out of the house at night and she would have to sleep in their neighbour's yard for the night. These were some of the

painful experiences that young women had confronted with at the hands of the men who were supposed to take over the fatherhood role in the absence of the child's biological father.

### **6.3.6. Summary of the theoretical framework**

The life course perspective provided a useful way in which to explore the experiences of young women raised in non-resident households. The theory was important for the purposes of this study because it captures the complexities of lives, explores interrelationships between social structures and elucidates on the impact of time, place and history on the lives of young, adult women. Below is the summary of the theoretical framework. Although, this study may be an important contribution to the literature on fatherhood. It is important to note that some of these findings are not necessarily new either to the literature on fatherhood or to the life course perspective.

#### **6.3.6.1 Father's disappearing – Timing lives**

In summarising the themes of timing lives as they appeared in this study, three important features of transitions over a life course, as outlined by Hareven & Masaoka (1988), were utilised. Firstly, there is the timing of the individual entry into and exit from the different work and family roles. In many developing countries throughout the world, the age at which women are becoming parents have decreased dramatically. According to Morrell et al. (2012), in South Africa there has been a reported drop in the number of teenage pregnancies although, as reported in chapter 2 of this study, one in three girls in South Africa is pregnant by the age of 20. Although it may be taboo in some countries to have a child during the adolescent years, Willan (2013) reports that 34% of young South African between the ages of 15 and 19 who were pregnant reported these pregnancies as planned. Furthermore, teenage pregnancy has been linked by researchers such as Peacock & Weston (2008) to paternal abandonment and thus the presence or absence of a father during pregnancy is an important feature of the earlier transitions of young women. The results of this study correspond with the literature review above with this study also finding that the age at which young women are entering universities and the labour force is increasing. This is a consequence of a number of events. However,

the most pertinent to this study is the failure to meet the minimum requirements to progress to the next grade. This failure is normally blamed on a lack of parental support. Those who fall pregnant, may take a year off school to nurse the child. A second feature is the harmonisation of an individual transition with that of the collective family. Once babies are born they inevitably become part of the family. In South Africa a child under the age of 18 is regarded as a minor and, as such, the parents of these pregnant girls become the legal guardians of the babies. Teenage mother often return to school after giving birth and are, thus, required to balance their school work and being a parent. According to Morrell et al. (2012), teenage mothers are often left to shoulder considerable responsibilities, juggling motherhood and schoolwork and often with little or no help from the father. The participants narrated cases in which the children of teenage mothers are raised by their maternal grandmothers with little or no help from the child's father or his family.

Finally, the feature of timing is of importance in view of the cumulative impact of early transitions on the transitions that follow. At the heart of teenage pregnancy is unprotected sex which exposes teenagers to the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. According to Wilan (2013), by 2010 in South Africa approximately 30.2% of women between the ages 15 and 19 were living with HIV. The early transition of unprotected sex and teenage pregnancy may lead to premature death in young women. Furthermore, as a result of this earlier timing teenage girls are at the risk of dropping out of school (Wilan 2013). The high rate of unemployment in South Africa also implies that these young women will probably struggle to find decent work later in life. Teenage mothers who return to school after giving birth find themselves completing matriculation in their late teenage years (19 years) or early twenties and, as indicated above, this delays their entry into institutions of higher learning and/or the labour force.

#### **6.3.6.2 Resist or respond – Young women's reaction to non-resident fathers**

Personal decisions as part of human agency, particularly, life course agency, also emerged strongly in this study. From the outset of this study it was alluded to that human agency, as an aspect of the life-course perspective, is evident in the way in which individuals respond to the

life events with which they are confronted. The main life event that had confronted the participants in this study was the absence of their fathers either through parental separation, divorce, non-disclosure by the mothers and abandonment. The responses of the participants in this study were classified under two themes; namely, feelings of anger and resisting teenage pregnancy. Daughters tend to project their feelings of anger onto both their mothers and their fathers. Daughters raised in non-resident father households are often angry with their mothers for denying them access to their fathers because the fathers fail to live up to certain social and cultural criteria. These criteria include, among others; demands for maintenance even when the father is unemployed, non-disclosure of the father's paternity and demands for damages and *lobola*.

On the other hand, daughters feel angry because their fathers succumbed to the societal and cultural pressures by choosing to abandon their children. According to Makusha et al. (2015), the ability to provide for one's children is as important aspect of masculine identity and an inability to provide material resources may damages masculine identity, thus forcing the man to respond in different ways. Makusha et al. (2015) continue by stating that some men have responded by distancing themselves from their children and, in some cases, even abandoning them. The second response of the young women in this study was their resisting the pressure to fall pregnant in their teenage years. Of the 34 participants in this study one participant only reported having fallen pregnant during her teenage years. The young women contended that one of the most important reasons why they managed to avoid falling pregnant during their teenage years was not merely the discipline at home or the lessons learnt from their friends' experiences and their environment but, rather, their ability to set goals and follow these goals. Coupled with this was the desire to make their mothers proud and at times to prove to their absent fathers that they (daughters) had been able to make something of themselves despite the absence of their fathers' help. It is recommended that future research in South Africa should study the extent to which father absence leads to teenage pregnancy, in particular in view of the fact that life course in the West has shown a strong link between father absence

and teenage pregnancy (Hutchison 2007; Carpenter 2010; Ellis et al. 2003).

#### **6.3.6.3 The role of historical events – Old versus new fathers**

The historical events of the time are also an important predictor of father presence with historical events playing an important role in shaping fatherhood. The historical landscape in black South African men in the 1960s, for example, found themselves in did not allow them to become actively involved in their children's lives. There were two main reasons for this, namely, repressive laws under apartheid and the emergence and prominence of the migrant labour system that separated black South African men from their families. It has also been noted that older fathers find it difficult to showing their emotions to their children as they believe this makes them appear weak in front of their children. Society has also prescribed to men the type of behaviour they should demonstrate in public with such emotions such as sadness and depression being contrary to the hegemonic masculinity (Van der Walt 2007). Thus, men tend to refrain from expressing these emotions in an attempt to preserve their masculinity (Van der Walt 2007). Crying is considered unmasculine and, hence, the famous saying "boys don't cry" (Vogel, Heimerdinger-Edwards, Hammer & Hubbard 2011).

The high rates of father absence in South Africa and globally has pushed for increased efforts to mentor fathers into becoming emotionally involved in their children lives. Such efforts include, among others, the HSRC Fatherhood Project, Sonke Gender Justice, National Fatherhood Initiative and Fathers for Justice. These endeavours are helping to shape a new generation of fathers who are more emotionally available than fathers were in the past. Finally, the school curriculum has been hailed by young women as one arena that teaches boys to be more emotionally involved with their children, namely, through a subject known as Life Orientation. It is little wonder that a study by Swartz et al. (2009), titled "Teenage Tata: voices of young fathers in South Africa", found that teenage fathers in the 21st century are more involved in the well-being of their children than their fathers were. The historical times in which these young fathers find themselves are encouraging them to be more involved fathers than their fathers ever were.

#### **6.3.6.4 Intricate interrelationships**

By its very nature, family is marked by and, to a large extent, thrives through interdependence. In line with the findings of Kok (2007), this study found that a family member's life course transitions have an impact on the entire family. Consequently, the life trajectory of the daughters is linked to their relationship with their fathers. Father absence had clearly had a negative impact on the lives of many of the young women in this study. The study identified three main challenges that young adult women experience as a result of father absence. Firstly, such young women find it difficult to form romantic and trusting relationships with other males thus providing evidence that the relationship between a father and a daughter is a powerful predictor of a daughter's relationship with other men. This study highlighted that the absence of the father in a household is, therefore, linked to the distrust of young women who grow up in such households towards other males. The study further revealed that such young women tend to form romantic relationships with older men or with men who remind them of their fathers. Thus, these inversely intergenerational links also appear to dictate the types of relationships which young women enter into. Some of the participants in this study alluded to their choosing men who displayed the same behaviours as their non-resident fathers, thus implying that these young women were trying to replace their fathers.

Secondly, households without a father are more likely to experience financial difficulty. Thus, father absence, as a transition, often has negative impact on the financial status of the family, especially if the father was the main breadwinner. In such cases, the father's absence leaves the mother burdened financially and forces the children to grow up quickly, for example, the participants reported that, at times, their mothers were forced to either take two jobs and/or work longer hours in order to provide for the family. This had forced the young women to take care of their young siblings and the household chores at an early age. Furthermore, some reported being left with their maternal grandparents while their mothers went to seek for migrant work. Finally, it would appear that the absence of a father may expose young women to danger. Households without a father-figure were also identified as ideal targets for robbers



and the children as prey for child molesters.

#### **6.4. Strengths of the study**

Although research on fatherhood has gained prominence in the last 40 years, research into the experience of non-resident fatherhood by young women has been neglected. As mentioned in section 1.2, much of the research on fatherhood has clustered boys and girls together. According to Peyper et al. (2015), a few non-Western countries only have started to explore the effects of fatherlessness on young women. This, this research study is making a meaningful contribution to this neglected area of research. The study collected a rich set of qualitative data on the views of the young women on fatherhood. The young women in this study were given the opportunity to express their frustrations, experiences and challenges and to make suggestions for future research. The environment in which the interviews were conducted was favourable and familiar to the participants, allowing them the freedom to express themselves in a calm manner.

#### **6.5. Limitations of the study**

The participants of this study were young, black women from low-earning households and who, in the main, were still pursuing their secondary education. The environment in which they had found themselves had had a major impact on their views of fathers and fatherhood. Some of these young women had either never met their fathers or experienced his presence and, as a result, many of them did not trust men. Secondly, the fact that 34 young, black women from low earning families only were interviewed implies that it is not possible to generalise the study to young women from other races and higher earning families. In addition, the sample size also limited the findings to the participants of the study and cannot be generalised to the Tlokwe Local Municipality.

#### **6.6. Recommendations for future research**

From the outset of this study I highlighted the lack of research into the role fathers play in their daughter's lives. However, this study further found that it would appear that the positive role played by non-resident fathers, especially in non-Western countries, has been forgotten.

There seems to be a misconception that non-resident fathers are automatically uninvolved in their children's lives by virtue of their being absent from the household. During the interviews it became apparent that non-resident fathers often play a bigger role in their children's lives than merely providing financial support. Future research should be undertaken into the role played by non-resident fathers in providing emotional and psychosocial support for their children. In addition, Mitchell, Booth & King (in Lesch & Scheffler 2016) found that daughters tend to benefit more from a healthy relationship with non-resident fathers than do sons. Thus, future research should explore the nature of these benefits. Literature has proved that father-child relationships differ according to the gender of the child (Lesch & Scheffler 2016) and, therefore, future research on fatherhood needs to be gender specific.

Finally, if, indeed, fatherhood is a social role that men undertake (as alluded to at the beginning of this study), then the role of men in the society needs to come under scrutiny. What role should religious leaders, teachers and prominent males in the society play in socialising young women who are raised in non-resident father households? It is, thus, essential that the role of the church and school is clarified as these two institutions significantly influence the lives of its members. Daughters tend to view pastors and teachers as parents and, thus, further research should explore the role which these prominent figures play in the lives of young women raised in non-resident father households.

## **6.7. Conclusion**

The young women in this study described an ideal father as someone who is caring, supportive and loving. A father, they felt, should be actively involved in a girl child's life as failure to do so results in young women experiencing developmental challenges. The participants in the study agreed that fathers can and should play a role in providing financial support to their families. However, they also highlighted that this role should not supersede the emotional role that fathers are expected to play. The participants in this study blamed a father's disappearance on two main factors: Firstly, the pressure exerted on fathers to pay maintenance even when they were unemployed and, secondly, the demand by maternal families for fathers to pay

*inhlawulo and lobola*. The participants argued that a failure to live up to these demands deprives fathers of their right to actively participate in their children's lives. One participant felt that the paying of "damages" is a one sided punishment, which ignores the reality that a child is conceived by both parents and not the father alone. The participants also felt that mothers sometimes played a role in keeping the fathers away, especially in a situation where a mother does not know whom the real father is. Certain participants felt that their mothers had been too embarrassed to tell their children that they were not able to identify real father is because they had, perhaps, had multiple boyfriends at the time of conception. One of the participants narrated how she had to have a DNA test because her mother was unable to tell which of two of her past lovers was her father.

Some of the participants of this study expressed how their fathers' failure to introduce them to their ancestors was causing them health problems. These participants believed their various sicknesses were being caused by the fact that they had not been properly introduced to their ancestors. However, despite all these possible reasons for a father's disappearance, there was consensus that absent fathers need to do more to be part of their daughters' lives.

One of the final questions I asked the participants was: "If you ever saw your father again what would you say to him?" The question brought tears to many of the participants' eyes. Several of them expressed anger and described how, if they could talk to him, they would insult him and ask him where he has been all the years he had been away. However, most of the participants indicated that they would eventually forgive their fathers because a relationship with him would be better than being angry. Although the participants agreed that such a relationship is vitally important, many of them stated that their fathers would have to live up to certain conditions before earning their forgiveness. These conditions included, but were not limited to, the fathers taking the first steps to genuinely ask for forgiveness, explaining their whereabouts during all the years they had been away and making sincere efforts to become involved in the life of their daughters. It became so clear to me that participants in this study were hungry for a father's love, touch, support and time.

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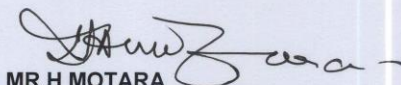
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## Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Certificate

	
<b>SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENTAL RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE</b>	
26 January 2016	
Dear Mr Lobaka	<b>Ref #:</b> 2015 SOCDERC 012 <b>Name of applicant:</b> ST Lobaka <b>Student #:</b> 54714532
<b>Decision: Ethics Approval</b>	
<hr/>	
<b>Name:</b>	Mr Simon Tebogo Lobaka (Supervisor: Prof ME Rabe)
<b>Proposal:</b>	Exploring the experiences of young adult women growing up with non-resident fathers in North West - Tlokwe Local Municipality
<b>Qualification:</b>	Master's degree
<hr/>	
Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Sociology Departmental Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Final approval is granted for the duration of the project.	
<p>The application was reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the Sociology Departmental Research Ethics Review Committee on 26 January 2016.</p> <p>The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.</li><li>2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the Sociology Departmental Research Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.</li><li>3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.</li></ol> <p><b>Note:</b></p> <p>The reference number [2015_SOCDERC_012] should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication (e.g. WhatsApp, E-mail messages, letters) with the intended research participants, as well as with the Sociology Departmental Research Ethics Review Committee.</p>	
Kind regards,	
Dr CG Thomas, Chair of the Department of Sociology	
 University of South Africa Pretoria Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane PO Box 392, UNISA 0003, Pretoria, Africa Telephone: +27 12 429 8111 Fax: +27 12 429 41 41 www.unisa.ac.za	

**Appendix B: Permission Letter from the Department of Education in the Dr. KK District**

	<b>Education and Sport Development</b> Department of Education and Sport Development Departement van Onderwys en Sport Ontwikkeling Lefapha la Thuto le Tlhabololo ya Metshameko <b>NORTH WEST PROVINCE</b>	Temane Building 8 O.R. Tambo Street, Potchefstroom Private Bag X1256, Potchefstroom 2520 Tel.: (018) 299-8216 Fax: (018) 294-8234 Enquiries: Mr H. Motara e-mail: hmotara@nwpg.gov.za
<hr/> <b>DR KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT</b> <hr/> <b>OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR</b> <hr/>		
26 February 2016		
Mr T Lobaka M A Sociology Student University of South Africa		
<b>PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH "EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG ADULT WOMEN GROWING UP WITH NON-RESIDENT FATHERS IN NORTH WEST PROVINCE" AT SECONDARY SCHOOL – TLOKWE AREA OFFICE IN DR KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT</b>		
The above matter refers.		
Permission is hereby granted to you to conduct your research at secondary schools – Tlokwe Area Office in Dr Kenneth Kaunda District under the following provisions:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; <b>The activity you undertake at the schools should not tamper with the normal process of teaching and learning; and will take place after school hours.</b></li><li>&gt; <b>You inform the principals of your identified schools of your impending visit and activity;</b></li><li>&gt; <b>Learners are told prior to the interview that it is not compulsory but voluntary.</b></li><li>&gt; <b>You provide my office with a report in respect of your findings from the research; and</b></li><li>&gt; <b>You obtain prior permission from this office before availing your findings for public or media consumption.</b></li></ul>		
Wishing you well in your endeavour.		
Thanking you		
 <b>MR H MOTARA</b> <b>DISTRICT DIRECTOR</b> <b>DR KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT</b>		

## **Appendix C: Questionnaire Guides**

### **Focus Group questionnaire guide**

#### **Women's conceptualisation of fatherhood**

I have spoken to many young women about fatherhood as part of preparing for this Master's research. Many of them made the following comments. "Though my father was present in the household he was general very absent, the only time he spoke was when he had to discipline. He worked hard and was always away and even when he was around I felt like he does not notice me."

1. Is this something that some of you experienced?
  - 1.1. Probe on experiences of young women on the statement made above.
2. What are your perceptions about fatherhood or what does fatherhood means to you?
  - 2.1. Probe on young women's conceptualisation of fatherhood.
  - 2.2. Probe on conceptualisation of fathers as protectors, providers and new/involved fathers.
3. What role do you think a father should play in a daughter's life?
  - 3.1. Probe on activities that research respondents believe a father should do with his daughter.
  - 3.2. Probe on a father's affirmation of a daughter.... Including traditional acceptance.

#### **Understanding of non-resident fathers**

4. In your view do you think resident fathers more involved in their daughter's lives than non-resident fathers?
  - 4.1. Probe on participants' view of paternal involvement.
5. How would you define fatherlessness in your own words?
  - 5.1. Probe on general understanding and definition of fatherlessness.
6. Why do you think most father do not feature in their daughter's life?
  - 6.1. Probe on reasons why young women think father are absent in children's lives.
  - 6.2. Probe on traditional and societal reasons for a father's disappearance.
  - 6.3. Probe on reasons of unemployment and the provider expectations.
  - 6.4. Probe on mother's non-disclosure and denial of access.
  - 6.5. Probe on young women's view of father absence as a result of economic activities.

#### **Challenges caused by non-resident fathered homes**

7. Do you think fathers are important for the general development of girls?
  - 7.1.1. Probe on young women's views of short term and long term effects of fatherless girls.
  - 7.1.2. In your view how would the absence of a father impact on a girl's adolescents' and young adulthood years?

### **Consequence of absent fatherhood**

8. What do you think are the consequences of growing in an absent father house?
  - 8.1. Probe on socio-economic status of these homes.
  - 8.2. Probe on the behaviour of the children.

### **Social fathering**

9. What is your understanding of the term social fathering (taking on fathering roles but not being the biological father)?
  - 9.1. Probe on young women's understanding of social fathering.
  - 9.2. Probe on what role young women think social fathers could play in a child's life.
  - 9.3. Probe on your women's experiences and views of social fathers.

Is there any other information you would like to share with me?

**Thank you** very much for all that you have shared with me. It was a pleasure speaking with you.

### **In-depth interview questionnaire guide**

#### **WARM UP AND BACKGROUND**

1. Tell me about your family composition.
2. How long have you lived with them?
3. How long have you lived in Ikageng?
4. Have you ever met your father?
  - 4.1. If yes, probe on the nature of the meeting (when was it? How old were you?)
  - 4.2. Probe on the girl's feeling when she met the father for the first time?
  - 4.3. What did you want to know and what questions did you ask him?

#### **Women's conceptualisation of fatherhood**

5. What is your understanding of fatherhood?
  - 5.1. Probe on definition of fatherhood and what it entails.
6. What role would you say a father should play in a girl-child's life?
  - 6.1. Probe on the societal expectations (fathers as breadwinners).
  - 6.2. Probe on customs and traditional expectations (e.g inhawulo / damages).
  - 6.3. Probe on changing roles of men.

#### **Experiences of being raised in a non-resident father household**

7. What was is like growing up in a household without a father?

- 7.1. Probe on socio-economic challenges.
- 7.2. Probe on general household management and survival.
- 7.3. Probe on who disciplined children.
- 8. Do you know the reasons your father did not reside in the same house as you?
  - 8.1. Probe on the reasons the mother gave for father's absence, if any.
  - 8.2. Probe the child's knowledge of the father's absence received from other sources (e.g. relatives and neighbours).
- 9. Describe how not having a father affect or aided your transition to womanhood?
  - 9.1. Probe on the challenges in transitioning as a result of an absent father.
- 10. What challenge did you encounter as a young girl-child in a fatherless home?
  - 10.1. Probe on general development challenges caused by the absence of a biological father.
  - 10.2. Point respondents to specific challenge areas such as households, school. Sexual, cognitive and moral development
- 11. How did it feel when your peers would talk about their fathers?
  - 10.1 Probe on respondents' feeling of loss, frustration and anger.

## **Consequence of absent fathers**

- 12. Do you think your father's absence has affected your romantic relationships in some way? If yes, how do you think it affected you?
  - 12.1. Probe on how absence of biological fathers affected romantic relationship.
  - 12.2. Probe on how the absence of father affected respondents' age of dating and age of their partners.
  - 12.3. Probe on how father absence affected their abilities to interact with the opposite.
  - 12.4. Describe how not having a father affect or aided your transition to womanhood?
  - 12.5. Probe on the challenges in transitioning to adulthood as a result of an absent father.

## **Social Fathering**

There is a term known as social fathering, these are uncles, stepfathers, grandfather, older and mother's lovers who take the role of the father in the absence of a biological father.

- 13. Did you have a social father (a man that was like a father) growing up?
  - 13.1. What was your relationship like with this father?
  - 13.2. What role did he play in your general upbringing?
  - 13.3. Did this man/men fill the gap that your father left?

Lastly

- 14. If you could get a chance to speak to your father, what you would say to him?



14.1. Probe on statements made by the respondents.

**Any other comments?**

1. Is there any question that I did not ask that you think I should have asked? If so, why do you think that is an important question?
2. Do you have any advice for me as I continue in this research project?

**THANKING PARTICIPANT AND CLOSING INTERVIEW.**

## Appendix D: Informed Consent Form

### **A] INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT:-**

- Thank you very much for agreeing to meet and speak with me.
- My name is Tebogo Lobaka and I am a Master's student from the University of South Africa and conducting my research paper on **Non-resident fathered girls**
- The information that you share with me **will be used to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on fatherhood**
- You **will not be paid any sum of money** for your participation in this study.
- Your participation in this study is **voluntary** and you **may withdraw from the study** at any point **without any negative consequences**.

Our discussion is scheduled to last approximately **45-60 minutes**. We can take a short break if you get tired during our discussion. Please remind me of the break if I forget okay?

Before we can proceed, there is a consent form that I would like us to fill, is just to say you understand the information above and you agree to participate in this study.

#### **Agreement to participate in the research study**

The agreement to participate in the research was signed at \_\_\_\_\_ (place) on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2016.

In order to capture our conversation accurately, it would be best to voice-record this conversation, **with your permission of course using this voice recorder**.

**Thank you once again for agreeing to share your experiences with me.** I am here to listen and learn about your experiences so, please feel free to share as much as you would like to with me. If you do not understand a question or something that I say, please let me know so that I can clarify it with you.

Remember that whatever we will discuss here will be **confidential**; your **name** and details will not be made available to anyone except the individuals involved in this study.

#### ***ETHICS***

- *Participation is voluntary*
- *Participant may choose to decline/terminate the interview at any time*
- *No risk of discomfort of any sort (physical/emotional/psychological) is envisaged*
- *All interviews are recorded and transcribed*
- *Data will be stored for 3 years after completion of study and then destroyed*

- *Confidentiality of all personal identifying particulars are ensured throughout the entire research project and afterwards*
- *Sign informed consent form*

Do you have any questions before we begin?

**Thank you.**

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## Appendix E: Request letter to recruit participants



Department of Sociology

University of South Africa

Dear Sir/Madam

### REQUEST RECRUIT RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

I am a M.A. Sociology student at the University of South Africa, currently conducting a research project titled: "*Exploring the experiences of young adult women growing up with non-resident fathers in North West – Tlokwe Municipality*" under the supervision of Professor M. Rabe.

The research study has four key objectives:

- To explore adult women's conceptualisation of fatherhood and what it entails
- To explore the experiences of young adult women raised in households with a non-resident father
- To explore the long-term effects of young adult women who grew up in non-resident father households
- To explore the experiences of young adult women who were cared for by men other than their biological fathers

This study is significant because it will provide young adult women with a space to share their experiences on the effects of growing up without their biological father but equally provide them with a platform to voice opinion on the

developmental challenges that fatherlessness brings to a girl-child and the lasting effects experienced during adulthood.

The key targeted population of this study is black women between the ages 18-25 years from Tlokwe Local Municipality, who grew up from homes without their biological father, regardless of the reasons for a father's disappearance. However, for comparative purposes young women raised in biological father present and social fathered (uncles, grandfather, stepfathers and mother's partner) household will be included in the data collection process.

Data will be collected by means of 30-45 audio-taped focus group interviews and in-depth face-to-face interviews. I undertake to safeguard the participants' anonymity by replacing real names with pseudonyms. Participants will be informed of the research and given informed consent form upon commencement of the interviews, and the participants reserves the right to withdraw at any stage of the interviews without negative consequences

I wish to apply for permission to draw a sample of girl-learners in Ikageng Local Municipality schools who fall within the targeted populations.

I hope to hear from you soon

Thank you for your attention

Yours truly,

Tebogo Lobaka

---

SIGNATURE OF THE RESEARCHER

---

DATE

## Appendix F: In-depth and focus group interview participants demographic Characteristics

Name*	Age	Household Head	Ever met father?	Mother's presence	Social father?
1. Nthabiseng	20	Grandmother	Yes, Several times	Yes, but is a migrant worker	Yes, Uncle
2. Thuto	23	Mother	Yes, from birth until age of 5	Yes	No
3. Relebogile	18	Sister	Yes, but Father physical and emotional absent but pays maintenance	No, mother is deceased	No
4. Lerato	25	Grandmother	Once	Yes, but mother is a migrant	Yes, Uncle
5. Lebo	19	Mother	No	Yes	Yes, but deceased
6. Dimakatso	24	Aunt	Yes before he passed away when she was 5	No, mother is deceased	Yes
7. Modiegi	25	Mother	Yes, Several times	Yes	Yes, uncle
8. Dieketseng	19	Grandmother	Yes, Once	Yes	Yes, uncle and brother
9. Mpho	23	Grandmother	Yes, father pays maintenance	No, mother is deceased	No
10. Naledi	25	Mother	Yes, father is a migrant work	Yes	Yes, uncle

\*Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the participants.

### Focus group Interview Participants

Name*	Focus group No.	Interview location
1. Charmaine	FG 1	Seiphemelo Secondary School
2. Gadifele	FG 1	Seiphemelo Secondary School
3. Tshepiso	FG 1	Seiphemelo Secondary School
4. Bontle	FG 1	Seiphemelo Secondary School
5. Florence	FG 1	Seiphemelo Secondary School
6. Dikeledi	FG 1	Seiphemelo Secondary School
7. Leah	FG 2	Apostolic Faith Mission Church
8. Abigail	FG 2	Apostolic Faith Mission Church
9. Keletso	FG 2	Apostolic Faith Mission Church
10. Boitshoko	FG 2	Apostolic Faith Mission Church
11. Bonolo	FG 2	Apostolic Faith Mission Church
12. Seithati	FG 3	Tlokwe Secondary School
13. Nkagisang	FG 3	Tlokwe Secondary School
14. Thandi	FG 3	Tlokwe Secondary School
15. Thengiwe	FG 3	Tlokwe Secondary School
16. Ntebaleng	FG 3	Tlokwe Secondary School
17. Lerato	FG 3	Tlokwe Secondary School
18. Zanele	FG 4	Seiphemelo Secondary School (2)
19. Refilwe	FG 4	Seiphemelo Secondary School (2)
20. Millicent	FG 4	Seiphemelo Secondary School (2)
21. Lindiwe	FG 4	Seiphemelo Secondary School (2)
22. Maki	FG 4	Seiphemelo Secondary School (2)
23. Thembeke	FG 4	Seiphemelo Secondary School (2)
24. Nosizwe	FG 4	Seiphemelo Secondary School (2)